

BOTTLED UP IN BELGIUM

THE BELGIAN ARMY IN THE FIELD

ARTHUR B. MAURICE



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BOTTLED UP IN BELGIUM

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THE LAST DELEGATE'S
INFORMAL STORY

BY

ARTHUR BARTLETT MAURICE

Author of "The New York of the Novelists," etc.



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PART I

GETTING INTO THE BOTTLE

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I

BOTTLE VISIONS

THERE have been times when I thought that the people who have been at home have been the ones who have seen things and experienced emotions. There were days in February and March, 1917, when the men in Belgium had a sense of being far away from the real march of events. For the thrills they had to depend upon the meager bits of news that leaked in. They brought blazing visions. Across the Atlantic, in the streets, the newsboys were

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crying the extras. The flag was being unrolled at every window. In the theaters the audiences were rising to the first bars of the National Anthem. Platform orators were hailing a land united, "From the rockbound coast of Maine to the Everglades of Florida." We could not sing The Star Spangled Banner or cheer for the flag. We were only shut up in the Bottle, a highly charged electric wire to the North, the battling armies to the South, the forbidden land of military operations to the West, and to the East—Germany! We wondered just what day the crash was coming and what it was going to bring. "We may all be hanged yet—or shot," said the Director, in a moment of smiling geniality. Brand Whitlock said that the situation reminded him of the old farmer in the Middle West whose wife had been long bedridden. "I do hope," he said, "that she gets well—or some-

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thing!" We speculated about our chances of eventual refuge in friendlier surroundings. We compared notes of what we had heard of the comforts and discomforts of the various prison camps. Sometimes, in moments of American flippancy, we made bets about our destination. Promises of safe conduct were in the bond, they were even in writing, but somehow we had lost confidence in scraps of paper.

It was understood that in entering the American Service for Relief in Belgium, a delegate was to write nothing about the conditions of that country resulting from the actions of the occupying military authorities until six months after the expiration of the war. I do not know whether that condition still holds, but I am assuming that it does. So I am leaving for others, of longer service and far wider experience, to tell, when they see fit, of the friction and strife,

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of the land under the yoke, of how the *chômeurs* looked when they went away, and how they looked when they came back, of what happened to the men and women of Virton. This is merely a superficial story, written as lightly as the grim subject will allow.

But if the more terrible side of things as they are in the stricken land is not to be told in detail, the haunting memory of it must endure. Never to be forgotten was the coming of the trains with their ghastly burden; the remnants of men dropping from the opened cars to the ground, the faces like those faces we saw in hideous photographs showing the victims of the crimes of the Congo and Pujut Mayo. Never to be forgotten the wailing of heart stricken women: "Oh! My husband! My son! My brother!" or the officers of his Imperial Majesty Wilhelm II, lining the station platform

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with sneers and laughter. It is not pleasant to think of the laughter and the sneers. They recall the pangs of impotent fury, moments of seeing red, the imagining of the possession of a vengeance wreaking power, of the strength to shatter and blast.

II

A WAR TIME CROSSING—SHIPBOARD SPY MANIA—FALMOUTH AND LONDON

IT was the eighth day out of New York that we first touched elbows with the reality of war. We were running up towards the English coast. "We are nearing the minefields," was the word passed from passenger to passenger. Ahead of us, though beyond the vision, the sweepers were clearing a path of safety. Suddenly the ship slowed down, and markedly changed its course. "Orders from the British Admiralty" was the explanation. As darkness came down, a blazing light was made to play on the Dutch tricolor flying at the masthead. "See who we are and don't fire," the flag seemed to be saying. Then, in the morning,

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we saw the brown Scillies. Out of the sky came a huge oblong floating object. It was a British Parseval. It scrutinized us, then apparently satisfied, turned northward, changed its mind, returned, and followed us all the way from Land's End to Falmouth Harbor. I had left New York on Sunday, January 7th, by the Holland-American liner, *Nieuw Amsterdam*, for a minimum service of six months with the American Commission for Relief in Belgium. Fate had written that those six months were never to be finished. I was to be the last delegate to reach the occupied country. Others started later, but were turned back by events. Thus, although the amount of work I was able to accomplish seems, looking backwards, ridiculously inadequate, I shall always retain the title of the C. R. B. *nouveau*. Crossing with me was Arrow-smith of New York. He was returning,

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after a few months' absence, to work that he had begun more than a year before. He had been stationed at Liège, and his descriptions of the city and of the Ardennes hills and valleys, forests and winding streams, brought back vividly the Walter Scott romance, "Quentin Durward." I seemed to see the great banquet hall in the Castle, the murdered Bishop, the terrified Liégeois, and to hear the Scottish Archer's ringing call of defiance and warning to the Wild Boar.

Going to Europe was not the casual affair of happier affairs. There is a story in itself in the complications attendant upon procuring the United States passport, the futile search for the birth certificate—we were lax in those matters in the years when the world was young—the going about from Consulate to Consulate for the necessary visés. In the end a baptismal certificate was ac-

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cepted in lieu of the birth certificate which could not be found, and the passport, "object—relief work" was issued for travel in Great Britain, Holland and Belgium. The later additions of Germany, Switzerland, France and Spain were not then foreseen. At the beginning of January, the *Nieuw Amsterdam* was regarded, from the points of comfort and safety, as the best boat crossing the Atlantic. Consequently the passenger list was a heavy one and all nationalities were represented. You became conscious of the babel of tongues in the long waiting in line at the Hoboken pier in the winter evening, under the flickering arc light. On the ship that spirit of unconventional friendliness which has always been a feature of travel by sea—which made acquaintance without the formality of introduction a matter of course—was markedly absent. You were guarded in your

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talk, the war was a subject to be discussed only with those of whom you felt comparatively sure. You looked from face to face in the smoking room, speculating as to who were making the trip for reasons of political espionage. When a stranger entered into conversation with you, you felt that you must lead him to the point where he would have to pronounce "squirrel" before becoming confidential. You were listening acutely for shades of accent. In the spy mania rampant, there were probably many injustices done. There was a tall, noisy blond, who invaded, uninvited, every corner of conversation, who told marvelous tales of escapes from prison camps, and who was heard conversing with the ship's stewards in singularly fluent German. The English lady across the table—incidentally her own intimate knowledge of Berlin, Paris, London and Washington and her repeated cross-

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ings made her hard to place—turned her eyes suspiciously in his direction. “I am convinced that he has his number in the Wilhelmstrasse” was the way she expressed it. There were others who shared that opinion. “Nonsense,” said a well known member of the Canadian Parliament a few days later, “I know all about him. I’ve known him all his life. I know his family in Ottawa. The only thing the matter with him is that he is rather light in the head and he likes to hear himself talk.” Then there was the young woman with the eyes who was supposed to be going to Rome as a Red Cross nurse and who kept in training for hospital work by playing poker—very profitable to herself—from morning to night. In a word the voyage was a nine-days’ game of “Suspect your neighbor.” We were to learn the difference between the easy going, too credulous England of other days and the England

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that had learned the lesson taught by grim war. That examination of passengers in the wooden sheds on the Falmouth Dock lasted from early morning until nearly sundown. I can imagine nothing more polite and nothing more thorough. Scotland Yard was there aiding the military authorities. In my own case I was saved by chance from a possible detention of several days. Through an oversight I had failed to obtain from the C. R. B. office the necessary papers stating my business in England. "You have nothing to show why you are here," said the officers. But a commission that I had neither invited nor welcomed soon smoothed the way. Frederick Palmer, who is the accredited representative of the American Press to the British Army and Fleet, had asked me to take the manuscript of his "My Second Year of the War" to England in order that it might be censored by the

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British War Office. My last impression of New York was of Palmer, bareheaded, running after my taxicab, as it left the Players Club, to throw in the concluding chapters.

Behind the examiners a man was standing. He scrutinized me sharply and ran his eyes over the papers that I had submitted. It was his whispered suggestion that led to the question.

"Have you a manuscript of any kind with you?"

I replied that I had.

"What is it?"

"Frederick Palmer's new war book."

"Please go and get it."

When I returned with the manuscript the stranger stepped forward. He was a Royal Messenger from the War Office. Mr. Palmer had cabled word of my coming. He had been sent from London to meet me. He would relieve me of the manuscript and

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assume all responsibility. Wide open were flung the doors that led to the waiting train.

With curtains tight drawn against the night, we wound our way across Cornwall and South Devon, Somersetshire and on into Paddington. It was almost midnight when we arrived, and the effect of the taxi ride, from station to hotel, through the fog barely pierced by the dim lights, was that of climbing a great hill. "In the morning you must go to Bow Street Police Station to report the first thing," were the last words of enjoinder, as I sought my room for the night. Somehow the very name brought a shock. My sleep was broken by dreams of a gorgeously criminal past. "Report to Bow Street in the morning!" I might have been a Claude Duval, a Jack Sheppard, I might even have been a Militant Suffragette. As I look back now, however, I am not thinking of the visits to Bow Street that I made but

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of the one that I was spared. One of the precautionary measures against Zeppelin raids is the imposition of a severe punishment on any one who shows a brightly lighted window. It was almost three o'clock in the morning and I was reading, with my feet gloriously stretched out to the fire, when the telephone rang, and rang again. The police were below, seeking the one responsible for the offending glare. But the discovery that it was just one of those "fool Americans" seemed to satisfy them. Assured that the curtains were drawn tight against the night, they went away.

III

RUNNING THE MINE FIELDS—ROTTERDAM —BELGIANS IN HOLLAND—THE WIRE

IT was understood that from ten days to two weeks would be the amount of time that we would be likely to remain in London waiting for orders from Brussels and Rotterdam. We arrived the night of Wednesday, January 16th. About noon, the following Monday, we were informed that we were to start that evening. At half past seven, we took our seats in the train for Gravesend. To each of us, as we left the C. R. B. offices, had been handed a huge package with instructions to return it from the Rotterdam office if we reached there. "It is a special kind of life preserver," they

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explained, "the particular property and invention of the C. R. B." I recalled the trip from Victoria to Gravesend in other days as one of three quarters of an hour. On this occasion, it was nearer two hours and a half. Then three hours more of waiting behind locked doors in an icy cold compartment. A friendly guard thrust his head in and explained that the delay was caused by the fact that there were ninety-eight interned Germans on the train who were being shipped across for Germany via Holland. They had to be examined first. When our turn came, it was past two, and it was past three when finally we walked up the gang plank of the *Prinz Heinrich*. In a way the examination of baggage had been more rigid than that at Falmouth. Landing they had taken away my gold; departing they took every bit of writing, all my books and the pack of playing cards that I had acquired

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for solitaire, as an assurance against monotonous hours. It was just as well. There were very few monotonous hours coming. It was six in the morning when the boat sailed and after two or three hours of sleep in a cubby hole, we crawled on deck to find a high wind and a choppy sea. Noon, and we were nearing the region of the minefields, and the order was given out that every passenger must have his life preserver ready at hand. The bow of the ship was rising and then smashing down again. I could not help thinking how easy that motion would make the work of the mine in the event of our striking one. Similar thoughts were in the mind of Arrowsmith, standing at my side. "I would live just about five minutes in that icy water," he said with a gloomy smile. We would have rather welcomed the appearance of a German torpedo boat to take us into Zeebrugge. That had been the

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fate of the *Prinz Heinrich* on her previous trip. But just then I felt the happy pallor of impending seasickness spreading over my face and began to be very brave when I thought about the mines.

The lights were burning when we reached the mouth of the Scheldt. In quieter water, I recalled seeing the provision ships flying the flag of the C. R. B. and two British torpedo boats and hearing the boom of distant guns. We learned what the sound had meant the next morning in Rotterdam—an engagement between English and German torpedo fleets. The German wounded were being landed in Holland. Again in Rotterdam we had anticipated a delay of doubtful duration. Again we were rushed quickly through.

Ten days to a fortnight, in this condemned town, had been Arrowsmith's pessimistic prophecy as, after the walk through

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the streets at midnight, we found ourselves in the Maas Hotel. Nor did the prospect seem any more promising when, in the morning we reported at the Headquarters of the Commission. No. 98 Haringvliet faces a tree bordered street beside a busy canal in the heart of the city. It was the official address of all the Americans who as delegates went into Belgium. If your friends at home addressed letters there and the Fates were kind, and the Germans approved of the contents, you might get them in time, which meant anywhere from six weeks to six months later. Over the faces of the men in 98 spread a grin when, in answer to questions, I acknowledged the possession of binoculars and a camera. Of the binoculars I was particularly proud. They had been a parting present. "Where do you think you are going! Through the Niagara Rapids in the *Maid of the Mist*, or down

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to Luna Park?" But my embarrassment disappeared, when, in turning over these possessions, I saw the safe half full of other cameras and field glasses left for safe keeping by previous delegates.

Information that Arrowsmith received at 98 Haringvliet sent him scurrying off in search of old friends, Belgians whom he had last seen in Liège, and who, at desperate risks, had made their way past the wire to the friendly soil of Holland. Two or three of them appeared at the hotel and from their lips I listened to the many strange, romantic stories of escape. Of one of them, with whom I was to dine that night, Arrowsmith said to me with a smile: "It was his boy." I knew at once to what the reference was. It was Arrowsmith's pet story, which he told so often and which was so well worth the telling. It concerned a little Liégeois, six years old, who had conceived a passionate

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attachment to the American. But one day he saw Arrowsmith riding by in a motor car by the side of a German officer. Heart-broken, shaken with sobs, the boy rushed off to his mother. "Oh, mamam! J'ai vu Arrowsmith, mon ami, avec un Boche!" And later, when man and boy met, the latter's greeting was one of sad accusation, "Je t'ai vu avec un Boche."

The morning of Thursday, January 25th, we took our seats in the train for Rosendael. There we were met by René Jansen, the C. R. B. courier. In a motor car we dashed southward towards the frontier. Soon the road began to be littered with Dutch soldiers, the material evidence of Holland's two and a half years' mobilization against the feared invasion. Then came a point where there were no more Dutch uniforms to be seen. I asked why. We were on Belgian soil, in what is known as the *Grenz-*

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zone. Suddenly, as we rounded a turn, we were confronted by a great double gate of reënforced wood barring the road. To right and left stretched a thin ribbon of steel. It was the famous electric wire stretched across Northern Belgium to prevent the Belgians from escaping into Holland. Behind, a hundred feet apart, paced men of the German *Landsturm*. Our car came to a stop. The double gates swung open. "This is the neck," said Arrowsmith. "You are going into the Bottle. The Lord knows when or whether you get out of it again."

I had heard much of the German system. I was to hear more of it from the boasting lips of German officers. It may be very fine, it may be very thorough, but from my own personal contact with it, I have found it childish compared to the system that I had encountered in England and the system that I was later to encounter in France. In

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thinking of it I recall a character in one of Edgar Allan Poe's stories of a man poring over a map. He could find the name of the smallest hamlet but he could not read the continents. One day crossing the frontier will mean being stripped and having your back painted with acid to be sure that you are not carrying any secret writings; the next you could carry a message of military purport from the British War Office to every able-bodied male subject in Belgium. Our examination at the wire was conducted by a fat, dull-eyed under officer aided by a sleepy boy in his teens. The under officer wrote in a ledger; the boy without looking streaked fingers through trunk trays and bags. Soldiers stood about looking blankly into nothingness. There was an hour's wait for no apparent reason, and then we entered another motor car, this one flying the red and white emblem of the C. R. B. Across

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the flat country, over the jolting *pavé*, we were hurried at forty-five miles an hour. The roads were deserted save for an occasional dog-drawn cart. The Belgian *chien de trait* had so far escaped requisitioning. Beyond Antwerp, where we stopped for a late luncheon, we saw, in the shells of what had once been prosperous villages, the first evidences of the Krupp guns. When we reached Brussels the lights were beginning to glitter in the Rue Royale.

IV

FIRST BRUSSELS IMPRESSIONS—THE INVADERS —GERMAN SOLDIERS—THE MEN OF THE C. R. B.—CLOCKS, RESTAURANTS AND THEATERS

THE first impressions of Brussels were of a city surprisingly, almost disappointingly, normal. It was in the bright light. The Ministers of the neutral countries were there to observe and to report. It was the home of the occupying military government, and upon its material comfort depended the comfort of thousands of German officers. There was, in the early part of 1917, still a hope that the sympathy, or at least the tolerating acquiescence, of a part of the Bruxellois might be won over to the Imperial Government. The uniforms did

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not push civilians off the sidewalks nor hustle them about in tramcars. Yet never for a moment could one get away from the sense of occupation.

Before the war the names of the streets and squares were printed first in French and then in Flemish. The Germans' scheme reversed the order. "Divide to rule" has ever been the motto of the Hapsburgs and the Hohenzollerns have adapted it to Belgium. The occupying government in a thousand ways and on every possible occasion seeks to divide, to pit Walloon against Fleming; Limbourg against the Brabant. Everywhere the agents are at work, raking up historical injustices, emphasizing the differences of race and language. But though outwardly submissive they are a hard people to drive, these Belgians. There may have been discontent before, but the invasion and its cruelties have united them, welded them

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more than ever into one people. "Who are the figures in the war that stand out as heroes to the Belgian imagination? Joffre? Poincaré? Lloyd-George? Haig?" I once asked a Belgian. There was reproof in the grave reply, "Why our own, of course. Our King and Cardinal Mercier." Albert's subjects may have grumbled at times when he was in the palace at Brussels or at Laeken, but to-day, holding the court together at Havre, a King of whose kingdom only a strip of sandy coast remains, he is an heroic, an inspiring figure, the incarnation of Belgium's rights, and the spirit of the *Brabançonne*. That he remains comparatively passive under the yoke does not mean that the Belgian is resigned to it. When he resisted by force of arms Prussian aggression and paid the terrible price he did his share. On England, France and the United States rests the duty of restoring

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him to his own. That has been his history. The fact that his land has been the Cockpit of Europe has relieved him of certain responsibilities.

The Belgian of the past may be compared to the proprietor of a tavern on the highway to which brawlers insist on coming. He could not bar his door against the intruders, or quell the disturbance. So when the bottles began to fly and plates were being smashed, he sought, with the wisdom of experience, a corner of safety, and when the row had spent itself, emerged to say, "Now, gentlemen, I expect you to pay for the breakage and to set the place in order. From the appearance of the room you must have enjoyed yourselves immensely. But please don't forget that it is my room."

But the Prussian vision, which sees so far, and yet which, from some curious astigmatism, overlooks so much that is perfectly

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obvious, was once again at fault. In the beginning the Germans counted on speedy assimilation. They were bringing the boon of Teutonic Kultur. After a few months had healed the wounds of invasion the Belgians would recognize the quality of the blessing. To be a part of the German Empire, to acknowledge the all wise rule of the Hohenzollerns! To the German mind that meant what conferring Roman citizenship meant in the eyes of the Roman of the time of Augustus. Von Kluck, on the march towards Paris before the Battle of the Marne, telling the frightened peasants who were brought before him that they would all be Germans and that it would be the best thing for them, was sincere. He was merely expressing the conviction that has, for a generation and a half, been scientifically drilled into the German mind, a conviction the expression of which seemed always to be hov-

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ering on the lips of the gray coated officers we knew in Brussels. But after two years of occupation the expected change of heart had not come. There could be no mistaking the sentiments that lurked behind eyes that were now sullen, now mocking.

Belgian resentment is based on patriotism and also on pigheadedness. Do not forget that the Belgian of to-day is the true lineal descendant of the volunteer of the barricades of 1830. The Dutch regulars under Prince Frederick had forced an entry into Brussels. But they found the Royal Park a trap. From the surrounding windows came a continuous fire. Every house was an ambush. They would have been annihilated or forced to lay down their arms were it not that the citizen soldiers of Brussels considered that fighting was a business to be carried on in business hours only. Every evening, after a day's work spent bravely on the barricades,

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the volunteers left their posts, returned to their homes, or went to their accustomed cafés to spend the evening in tranquillity.

We had encountered sentinels at every turn of the journey from the frontier; in Brussels they were everywhere. *Landsturm* men, bands carrying the word "Politzei" on their arms, were in every square. The German flag was flying over the Palais de Justice, the Bourse, the King's Palace, every public building of the city. The Palais de Justice was a German barrack, the King's Palace a military hospital. The building in which took place the Duchess of Richmond's Ball the night before the Battle of Waterloo was the *Pass Centrale*, to which you applied for your permit to ride in a motor car or to make a journey to Holland. Every public building had been taken over for some kind of military use and thousands of private houses had been requisitioned as habi-

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tations for the officers. How many soldiers there were in the capital it would be hard to say. The number varied from week to week. But always it was to be estimated by the tens of thousands. There was nothing of the romance of war in their appearance. The green-gray uniforms were soiled and shabby. The faces of the men were for the most part woodenly inexpressive. There had been a marked change, I was told, since the previous summer. Formerly the soldiers sang, and the officers banged tables and toasted one another in the Palace Hotel. But gayety went out with the collapse of the Kaiser's peace overtures. Then there had been bonfires in the streets and the soldiers had danced around them, and clapped one another on the back and told every one how the war was victoriously over and how they were all going home. Had not the Kaiser decreed it? The disillusion-

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ment brought a bitter, sullen disappointment. The third day after my arrival was the Kaiser's birthday. There was an attempt to manifest a little spirit and enthusiasm. But it was so obviously forced.

Some of the men of the C. R. B. stayed in *pensions*. But most of us lived in houses which had been placed at the disposal of the Commission by the owners for the double motive of appreciation of the work that was being done and in order to keep them from being occupied by the "Boches." It was at No. 126 Avenue Louise, a broad thoroughfare lined by some of the city's finest residences and running from the circle of Boulevards to the Bois de la Cambre, that I went to live. The owner of the house had been lucky enough to cross into France before the occupation and was living in Paris. In the house, which had been left in charge of two servants, eight of us, Leach, Maverick,

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Wickes, Kittredge, Arrowsmith, Curtis, Sperry and I, had some sort of headquarters. It was seldom that more than four or five appeared at the breakfast table. Maverick was a North of France man. Wickes spent the greater part of the week in Namur. Sperry, to whom was attributed the immortal *mot*, "There isn't one of these foreign countries, but what, if you live in it long enough, it will 'get your goat,' " usually had an engagement elsewhere. But no matter what the number present, here was no chance to complain of the monotony of existence. "The life of an American delegate is a hard life," Maverick one day said whimsically. "Here we are forced to live in a place quite as humble as the average house that you see on Fifth Avenue overlooking Central Park. I am reduced to the humiliation of riding about in an Overland car with a chauffeur only in half livery. To-night I shall prob-

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ably be obliged to dine at the Taverne Royale." But in a way Maverick's flippancy was designed to cheer us up. When the words were spoken the thermometer at the side of the mantelpiece registered 8° above zero Fahrenheit. It was the bitterest winter in recent history and coal was not to be had.

But our lot in 126 Avenue Louise was no more uncomfortable than the lot of the other delegates. Everywhere was the same shivering splendor. In the Avenue Marnix—No. 18—lived Jackson, Brown, Pate, and Osborn. Somewhere in the rather remote Rue Africaine was the habitation of Fletcher and Simpson. In the Rue Saint Bernard, in a house where in the dining room there was a fire-place with a gas contrivance that radiated real heat that could be felt almost six feet away, Thwaites, Williams, Percy, and Dyer lived happily.

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There was a delightful gray haired, soft eyed little Abbé who liked the company, the cooking, and the wines at No. 58 Rue Saint Bernard. About once a week he appeared at the dinner hour. "Set an extra cover. Monsieur l'Abbé will dine with us to-night," the *bonne* would be told. "Oh, yes, Monsieur. I already know, Monsieur. Monsieur l'Abbé stopped here last evening to inform me that he would be dining here to-night, and to suggest the courses." The Director and his son lived in the Rue de Commerce, and the Assistant Director in a young palace facing the Royal Park.

Five o'clock was the closing time for all shops; nine o'clock for cafés, restaurants and theaters. The Germans called the hours six and ten. They had turned all the public clocks in Belgium forward an hour to conform with the clocks in Berlin. In the seclusion of your house or your pocket, you

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might carry the hour more in accordance with the Brussels changes of light and darkness. Thus there were two times,—“There is Boche time and there is Christian time,” was the way the Belgians expressed it. A surprising epidemic had broken out among the public clocks of Belgium. It was the Great Plague in the history of clocks. Never before have so many clocks gone so hopelessly and irreparably out of order—immolated on the altar of patriotism. Before the war, even Parisians were known to speak with envy of the Brussels *cuisine*. The resources at their disposal may have grown more limited but the cooks have lost none of their cunning. Those people who could afford to pay could dine, and dine well. There were of course the two meatless days a week, there were restrictions as to the number of courses allowed and there was the rationing of bread.

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The Taverne Royale once served a patron a rabbit stew on a Tuesday. That rabbit stew deserves a place with the bill of fare which the bandit Luigi Vampa offered to Danglars in the last part of the "Count of Monte Cristo." It cost the proprietor of the restaurant twenty-five thousand francs. Prices were naturally high. In the little restaurants near the Grand Place, for which the city has so long been famous, such restaurants as the *Filet de Sole*, the *Gigot de Mouton*, the *Épaule de Mouton*, the bill presented at the end of an ordinary dinner would be from forty to fifty francs. The only communications appearing in the Belgian newspapers that could be regarded as sincere, were certain plaintive letters recalling the bill of fares at two francs fifty or three francs fifty in the days of yore. Yet after a time one began to take prices philosophically. After all a franc was not a

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franc: it was only, by compulsion, four-fifths of a German mark—a matter of twelve cents instead of approximately twenty. We consoled ourselves with that thought. Later we found it hard to adjust ourselves to new conditions when we reached Switzerland and France. It led us to extravagance.

If an egg cost a franc, a pair of boots was proportionately even higher. Yet it was surprising to see the brave showing made by the shop windows of Brussels, despite two and a half years' unproductiveness, and the shutting off of supplies from the outside world. Some of the shops even went so far as to advertise that all the goods displayed in the *étalages* were being sold at the prices of August 1st, 1914. Half of the Brussels theaters were open with the prices of seats ridiculously low, 2.75 francs for a *fauteuil d'orchestre*, 4 francs for a box seat. They

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were playing mostly old plays, such as the "Count of Luxembourg" at the Scala and Dumas' "L'Etrangère" at the Molière.

V

“FOR GOD, FOR COUNTRY, AND FOR YALE!”

PERHAPS a few words of introduction are necessary to explain an impression that I shall always retain with particular vividness. The music to which a great many of the songs of our American Universities are set belonged originally and in a number of cases still belong to tunes of earlier and foreign origin. Thus a visiting Englishman, in the Cambridge Stadium the afternoon of a Yale or Princeton football game, would find himself at home with the strains of “Fair Harvard. Thy sons to thy jubilee throng,” because he has always known them as the medium of Tom Moore’s “Believe me if all those endearing young

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charms!" Two years ago, in the Palmer Stadium at Princeton, I witnessed the annual contest between Harvard and Princeton in company with Roger Boutet de Monvel, the son of the painter, and himself an author of conspicuous talent. In the interval between the halves the Harvard cheering section broke into a song and by the waving of handkerchiefs, displayed a huge crimson H. The Frenchman turned, his cheeks slightly flushed. "Why," he said, "they are singing the *Marseillaise*." "Dear old Yale," more generally known as "Bright College Years," is the German national anthem; Columbia's "Hail Columbia" the adaptation of an old Austrian hymn. Cornell's "Up Above Cayuga's Waters" is "Lovely Annie Lisle."

I had seen soldiers, thousands of them, but as units, or in little groups of two or three. I wanted to see them *en masse*, to catch the

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effect of that almost invisible green-gray uniform of which I had heard so much. I remembered the description of the march of the German armies through Brussels given me by some one who had seen it. "You could see the horses of the passing Uhlans," the man had told me, "but you could not see the riders. As, chanting, the column climbed the slope of the Chaussée de Louvain, it seemed to be swinging out of the Feudal Ages," was the way in which Brand Whitlock was later to picture it. The chance came the second day after the arrival in Brussels. A little before noon, I had left the C. R. B. offices at 66 Rue des Colonies and climbed the short cobbly ascent to the Rue Royale. There was the sound of rolling drums. Across the Place Royale, round the equestrian statue of Godfrey de Bouillon, swung the head of the column, on its way to the change of guard mount. On it

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came, nearer and nearer, the bayonets flashing in the sunlight, the tramp of the iron-shod boots timing with the drum taps. Fifty yards more and the head of the column would be opposite the point on the sidewalk where I was watching. The band leader turned, waved his baton and there blared out the strains of *Die Wacht Am Rhein*.

Then, something very curious happened; something that I can never explain; that I shall never forget. It was the hold of the years. The moment, the scene, the green-gray column against the trees of the opposite park, passed from the vision and from the mind. The notes brought a thrill to the heart, a tingle to the cheeks, a poignant memory of kindlier strife. I seemed to be looking over a vast amphitheater, University Field at Princeton, or the old Yale Field, or the Bowl, or the Palmer Stadium. I seemed to be seeing the waving of blue and

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orange and black, and tens of thousands of excited faces, among them those of the most beautiful girls in the world. I seemed to be seeing the green turf and the chalk lines, and the teams running on the field for the beginning of the second half, and in the great stand opposite the swinging hats of the cheering section. And the music was molding itself into the words,—

Bright college years with pleasure rife
The shortest, gladdest years of life.
How swiftly are ye gliding by
Oh, why doth time so quickly fly?
The seasons come, the seasons go,
The earth is green, or white with snow,
But time and change shall naught avail
To break the friendships formed at Yale.

In after life, when troubles rise
To cloud the blue of sunny skies,
How bright will seem through memory's haze,
Those happy, golden, bygone days;

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Oh! let us strive that ever we
May let these words our watchcry be:
Where'er upon life's sea we sail,
For God, for Country and for Yale!



PART II
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I

THE COMMISSION AND ITS CHIEF—THE C. N.
—MOTOR CARS—THE AGGLOMERATION—
THE SLEUTHS—THE DOCK OFFICE—
STAGING THE COMEDY

SO much has been written about the C. R. B. and its work that I shall try to sketch the organization in the fewest possible strokes. We were in Belgium for the *ravitaillement*, wonderful and almost untranslatable word. Belgium invaded, her army driven to the Ysèr, her industries paralyzed, much of her live stock requisitioned by the conquerors, was in desperate need. Then, in October, 1914, the C. R. B. came into being, and from various ports in the western world the ships flying its flag began streaming across the Atlantic, laden with the

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yield of the wheat fields of Kansas and Canada, and the products of the Chicago stockyards.

To the helm a great man had been called. I have never met Herbert Clark Hoover. Three days before I landed at Falmouth he sailed for the United States from Liverpool. Then the Belgian Bottle became a bottle with a sealed cork. When I reached France in April he was in England. But it was not necessary to meet him to know. The evidence of the C. R. B., the organization's unswerving loyalty, profound belief, deep seated admiration, were enough. If they were not I would accept the verdict of the Belgian, Émile Francqui. Once the wrangling over agreements and concessions were more than usually accute. The occupying military authorities felt that theirs was the whip hand, and they were not gentle in pushing their advantage. The Chief bided his

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time. One day, like a bolt from the blue, came his sweeping order. "Stop the work. Disband the Commission. Send the men home." He had seized upon the exact moment, the one hour above all others when the Germans stood in greatest need of our work for the Belgians. Panic stricken, they yielded upon all points. When Francqui heard what had happened his hands were tossed skyward in astonished tribute. The equivalent in Americanese of his comment was: "Some diplomat!"

Rotterdam was the C. R. B. port of destination, and from there the cargoes were distributed, mostly through the medium of the remarkable canal system, to the various provinces of Belgium, and the occupied section of the North of France. C. R. B. offices were maintained in New York, London, Paris, Rotterdam and Brussels. New York saw to the chartering and filling of the

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ships. London and Paris nursed them across the Atlantic. Rotterdam received them, unloaded them, sent them back again, and then forwarded their cargoes. Brussels was the headquarters at the front. From there, through the C. R. B. and the C. N., the food was passed on in turn to the Provincial Committees, the Regional Committees, the Communal Committees. In the actual work of food distribution and various forms of inspection over forty thousand Belgians were continually engaged. Many of the cooks I met in the vast kitchens where the daily soup for the needy of Brussels was prepared had been, in days of peace, railway employees. In Belgium last winter there were about thirty men, who were C. R. B. delegates in the strict sense of the term. A delegate gave his services. His transportation from the United States to Belgium was provided, and he was allowed

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a certain daily sum to cover the actual expenses of habitation and food. First among the delegates were the Director, Warren Gregory, and the Assistant Director, Prentiss Gray. Both Californians. I am not going to tell what I think of them, because it would sound like fulsome flattery of Mr. Hoover, who selected them.

Theirs was the not-over-pleasant task of dealing with the heads of the occupying government. It was a position calling for great tact, self-control, and a saving American sense of humor. But there were times when even the Director's good natured patience was sorely tried. "You people have the most extraordinary ideas of your responsibilities," he once bluntly told the Germans. I think the occasion was a covert threat at shutting off the Belgian food supply in case the Commission did not yield in some point at issue. At another time a clear verbal

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agreement was reached and a cablegram to Mr. Hoover sent outlining that agreement. A few days later the Germans, having thought the matter over, were not so well pleased with the pact. The expedient to which they resorted was not unfamiliar. The director must have been mistaken. "It is not surprising," explained the High Command deprecatingly, "I English so poorly speak. You must have misunderstood." But suavely smiling the Director pointed out that His Excellency's excellent English could not have been responsible. The matter had long ceased to be one of mere verbal contract. His Excellency's promise had been embodied in the message cabled to the Chairman of the Commission. That cablegram had been sent by German hands; it had gone forth with the stamp, seal, and endorsement of the Imperial Ger-

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man Government. The original conversation might have been unofficial; but not the message.

Under the direction of the Director and Assistant Director, the delegates were assigned and shifted. There were the North of France men. A North of France man was sent to Lille, or Saint-Quentin, or Valenciennes, or Charleville, or Longwy. Day and night he was in the company of a German officer. The two had desks in the same office and occupied adjoining bedrooms. Somehow or other the officer always got the best desk and the best bedroom. They breakfasted, lunched, dined together. They sat side by side in the back seat of the motor car. If the officer wished to hold nightly revel in some café, he had to persuade the delegate to accompany him. The American was supposed to hold no communication

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with any unit of the civil population save in the presence of his officer. It was a Siamese twins kind of existence.

In ones or twos, according to the size or importance of the region, were the men of the Belgian provinces, the men who lived at Liège, or Namur, or Antwerp, or in Luxembourg, or Limbourg, or the Hainault. They came to Brussels for a Thursday conference with the Director. The North of France men's day at the capital was Saturday. Living in Brussels were the men of the Agglomeration Bruxellois, of the Brabant direction, the men who watched the docks and the mills, the men who overlooked the distribution of clothing, the man who looked after the question of passports and privileges and restrictions, and the organization's secretary. Side by side with the C. R. B. was working the Comité National,

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the central organization by which the Belgians were helping themselves.

The weekly meeting of the Comité National was also on Thursday morning immediately following our own meeting. We were expected to go from one to the other. In the cream and gold *salon* gathered many of the most important men of Belgium. But dominant over all, like a martinet of a school teacher among his pupils, was the chairman of the Committee, Émile Francqui. "Watch Francqui ride them" was whispered in my ear the morning of my first meeting as we took our seats and the chairman began the reading of the *Ordre du Jour*. Ride them he certainly did. But if he played the rôle of a dictator he was getting a dictator's results, and the situation was one in which a strong man was needed. "Did anything happen at the meeting to-day?" once asked

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an American delegate who had arrived just in time to meet us filing out. "Happen! We should say so," was the reply. "Francqui apologized to M. Tibbaut for having squelched him last week."

That rare sight in the streets, a motor car—in all the city of Brussels there were less than a hundred—was almost certain to be flying either the flag of the C. N. or of the C. R. B. The exceptions were the cars belonging to the legations, and those in which rode German officers of exalted rank. The German motor cars were few in number but they were astonishingly conspicuous. Recall certain feelings of about the year 1900 when what we then referred to as a "red devil" dashed from a side street across a city avenue, or thundered wickedly by frightened horses on country roads. Very likely that murderous rate of speed was about sixteen miles an hour and if you were

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to see the monster to-day with its short wheel base, its snub nosed motor, its archaic ignition and its high, awkward rear entrance tonneau you would be moved to derisive laughter. But seventeen or eighteen years ago the sight of it and the sound of it rasped the nerves. The arrogance of its bearing incited social unrest. It flaunted high handed prosperity before the eyes of the poor. It was an agent that if it did not hurry the coming of revolution, was at least certain to impair the vigor of the republic. And that is how the German driven motor cars affected you in 1917. Long before the siren screamed its commands the machine-gun like explosions from behind warned you of the car's coming. In the early months of the German occupation the cars had been equipped with a musical warning device that emitted a kind of flutelike two note call. But from behind cover Belgian small boys

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answered it echoingly with the words "Paris-Berlin," and in a short time the device was laughed off the cars. I do not know whether there was any punishment for failing to make way at once for any overtaking German car. But Louis, the chauffeur, took no chance. The Overland would swerve far over to the right and the gray invader, carrying its stiff, rigidly sitting officers would graze by. The driving wheels were always double tired. "They learned that from the French," snorted Louis. "They never thought of it themselves. Sales Boches!" I think the cars got even on German nerves at times. But it was in our direction that the hostile glances were directed. "Nobody goes about in motors these days," a German was heard to grumble in one of the cafés, "except the high-ups and the American spies." That is how we were regarded long before the break.

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On my arrival I was destined for Liège, but a change of plan assigned me to the Agglomeration Bruxellois, and I found myself plunged into mysterious problems concerning milling at 82 and *tamise* and *blutage* and goods *avariés*. The head of the department was Jackson of Massachusetts. I suspect that Jackson was not the best of teachers. I know that I was one of the most lamentable of pupils. The more I tried to get it all into my head, the more hopelessly entangled it seemed. Later I was to learn that my experience had been exactly the experience of other men. Jackson and I wrangled, and we snarled, or, worse still, we were coldly polite. Never mind, Jackson, some day we are going to sit down at a table in less nerve-jangling surroundings, and laugh over my lacerated feelings and your irritated feelings. Then maybe you will come to believe that I am not such a driv-
el-

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ing idiot as I seemed in the office on the second floor of No. 66. In the Agglomeration I visited *soupes scolaires* and *soupes populaires*. I watched the Little Bees at their work. I accompanied the inspectors on their rounds of the bakeries.

Especially I accompanied my two inspectors. Mine, because of them I shall always think with a feeling of proprietorship. Assuming that the reader has some acquaintance with the comic supplement of American newspapers, imagine a Belgian Mutt and Jeff, with a flavor of Alphonse and Gaston. It goes without saying that one was extremely tall and the other comically short; that they were inseparable, and that each complemented the other. The office understanding their qualities, saw that they hunted together. They quarreled from time to time, they addressed each other ceremoniously, and their manner was one of ex-

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aggerated politeness. Starting out for the day's work the first delay was at the door of the little elevator of No. 66. There was always an amiable dispute as to who would enter last. It was not "After you, my dear Alphonse," but "Je vous en prie, mon cher monsieur." No one not a Belgian can put into that "Je vous en prie" what a Belgian puts into it. But once in the full swing of their investigations, they were, as some one in the office—I think it was Jackson—expressed it "Two hounds on the scent." They loved their art. Not Sherlock Holmes, or Poe's Dupin, or Gaboriau's Lecoq, or Père Tiraclair ever took sleuthing more seriously. Their investigations led not along the highways of crime, but figuratively and literally into the tortuous narrow streets. The prey they were stalking was the baker who was putting too much water in his bread; or who was concealing in his cellar

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an extra sack of flour in order to sell it at an augmented price. They relied on unexpected visits, on sudden surprises, in which one of them would hold the baker or the baker's wife in conversation, while the other would slip in through a side door to investigate. Again many of the clues on which they worked were furnished by the anonymous letters of denunciation, of which a dozen or more were to be found in every morning's mail. But their joy in the labor when the paling cheek, the shifting eye, the faltering voice of the questioned person seemed to promise results. "Ah, Madame hesitates! Madame has contradicted herself! Madame denies all knowledge of the chef in the restaurant in the Rue de l'Arbre-Sec—when it seems that he is Madame's brother! Madame is trembling! Is it not so, Monsieur (this appeal directed at me) that Madame is trembling? You see, Ma-

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dame, that the American gentleman who has come ten thousand miles for the *ravitaillement* perceives that you are trembling." Somehow face to face with the conflict, its comparative triviality was forgotten. It was a matter of a few loaves of bread. The probable punishment would be a warning; the maximum punishment a month's suspension from baking. Yet there was anguish in the woman's twisting face, and triumph gleaming in the countenances of the inspectors. And as we emerged from the darkened bakery into the light of the street one or the other of my companions would flash me a look. It was like Conan Doyle's hero commenting, "Deep waters, Watson!" or "This time I have found a foeman worthy of my steel."

The aftermath of the investigations came in the bakers' trials that were held every two weeks in an improvised court room on

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the second floor of No. 66. The reports of the various inspectors would be weighed and sifted, the past records of the persons involved examined, and a certain number of letters sent out summoning the alleged culprits before the tribunal. Jackson or I or both of us were expected to be present as representing the C. R. B. although the part we played was about equivalent to that of the lay judge who in some States fattened on the American courts of fifteen or twenty years ago. We looked wise, severe, reproachful, or sympathetic. We nodded gravely, and remarked in our best French, "*Il fait semblant de ne pas comprendre,*" when some Fleming, by a pretended inability to understand his own or any other language, sought to evade the searching questions.

Also, in the weeks with the Agglomeration, I learned to hold the loaves knowingly

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against my ear to detect the presence of too much water, to pronounce judgment as to whether it was well or poorly baked. I absorbed words of which the French Academy is probably ignorant, and then forgot them. I studied the charts lining the corridors—the charts marking the ships on the oceans, and showing the amount of “riz,” “saindoux,” “froment,” “lard,” and sucre” expected. Then the delegate who had what was known as the “dock job” started for home and I was told to take his place. My headquarters was my desk in a small frame building at the Bassin Vergote.

My feeling for Brussels is not that of Leonard Merrick, who, referring to Paris, says somewhere that visiting the Belgian Capital is like calling on the sister of the woman with whom you are in love. Some day, not too far in the future, I hope to go back, to find a beautiful city and a smil-

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ing people. Over the Palais de Justice and the Hotel de Ville the red, yellow and black will be flying instead of the red, white and black. The public clocks of the land will have recovered from their curious malady and will be ringing out the Belgian hours. If I am haled to punishment for having attempted to sing the "Brabançonne," or the "Marseillaise," or "Tipperary," or "Yankee Doodle" in a public place, it will be because of the quality of the singing, and not on account of the nationality of the tune. In the Taverne Royale, or the Filet of Sole, or the Shoulder of Mutton, I shall sit down to dinner with a blessed "Curfew shall not ring to-night" feeling. King Albert will be riding out from the Palace, and bowing and saluting, and there will be no gray-green uniforms in the streets, and the goose step will be far away, and in blasted villages the work of reconstruc-

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tion will be going on. Then there will be many spots to be revisited, and one of the very first will be that wooden shack between the vast Hangars where I spent so many hours with the timid, soft voiced De Schutter, and Cambier of the Assyrian beard.

To that shack I made my way every morning, past the sentinels at the grille. Sometimes I was challenged and sometimes I was not. There was the need of signing many papers as the C. R. B. delegate. Outside were the tasks of speeding up the unloading of the *alleges*, of going to the *Hafenant*, the German portmaster, to try to find out why this *batelier* was refused his papers to sail, and that one to unload—the Belgians of the Dock Office could not be dragged to the *Hafenant's* office—of visiting the freight station in search of incoming C. R. B. cars, and the great mills that lie to the north of the city at Schaarbeek and Haren and Vil-

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vorde. It was on one of my first mornings on this work that I witnessed a comedy.

The papers were all signed and there was need to go to the Trois Fontaines at Vilvorde in search of a missing freight car. To avoid a very bad bit of *pavé* in the most direct way, Louis, the chauffeur, made a wide *détour* through Schaarbeek. Passing a building that stood back from the street, I noticed that something was taking place. I told Louis to turn around and stop in a good position to see. It was a public building of some kind, a school I think, that had been taken over by the occupying military authorities. Three sides of the open space were lined by soldiers. German officers descended the steps, walked across the picture, turned, walked back again, and reascended the steps. Then more German officers, then some Bulgarian officers who had just arrived in Brussels, then more Germans. In the

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middle of the scene was a little line of ragged Belgian men, women and children. They had been gathered from the near-by streets. They seemed much frightened. Appeared a dozen under officers and privates carrying loaves of bread. These they thrust into the hands of the people in the line, while in a corner the clicking camera recorded the touching scene, to be shown in Germany and Austria and in neutral countries throughout the world, of "Kind Hearted Prussians Feeding the Belgian Populace." That was what the camera showed. But what it did not show were the fields of Kansas and Manitoba, or the ships of the American Commission that had brought the wheat that had been converted into the flour from which those loaves were made, or the American dollar sign indicating who had paid for the loaves, or even the Belgian agents to whom the distribution was the morning and even-

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ing work. That day these agents had been thrust aside and their bread taken from them. "On this occasion," they were told, "our soldiers will perform your task. You can leave the loaves and go home." When I returned to the C. R. B. office for lunch, I thought I had a story to tell. I was disappointed when my description fell rather flat. "We have heard all about it before," men informed me. "That comedy is being staged from time to time all over Belgium. We don't mind their taking pictures but we wish they would leave our bread alone."

It was some such sort of a stage setting, on a wider and more varied scale, that was prepared and manipulated early in the war for the benefit of a group of influential American correspondents. The older men of the C. R. B. would laugh if a newcomer quoted in favor of the Germans some of the testimony that had been offered in all sin-

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cerity and honesty by those "eye-witnesses." The immortal Tartarin of Tarascon, on the eve of his ascent of the Jungfrau, listened to the voice of Bompard, and was persuaded that Switzerland did not exist. The American journalists, taken along a path that had been arranged for their reception—a path of untouched villages and well coached peasants—were almost ready to cry aloud to the world, "Belgium! There is no Belgium!"

II

GERMAN OFFICERS

“**W**HAT are the German officers like? What is their behavior in Belgium? What is their version of the origin of the war, and what are their explanations of the amazing manner in which the Imperial Government has conducted it?” These are questions which have been asked repeatedly. During the time that I was in Brussels I met perhaps twenty German officers. I talked with eight or ten of them. They seemed quite willing to be led into a discussion of the war, but we had been warned to avoid the subject as a dangerous one. Consequently for my impressions of the German officers and their mental process

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I am drawing mostly on what has been told me by other men of the C. R. B., especially the men of the North of France. But there are certain memories which we all of us took away, no matter how slight and short-lived was the acquaintance. We recall, save in one or two cases, an artificial politeness, an attempt at *bonhomie* which hardly concealed the sneer. “What is German militarism?” I will tell you. It is order, discipline, obedience.” That is always and ever the refrain. That covers all, explains all, justifies all. To them these virtues exist nowhere else in the world. We, in particular, are barbarians. There had been some slight infraction of one of the ninety and nine thousand rules that govern life in Belgium by a member of the C. R. B. and at the headquarters in the Place Royale Major B. was storming at Sperry of California. Sperry was not the offender, but as he was

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the passport man, official abuse usually descended upon his head. But a sense of humor had Sperry, and he bore it all stoically. "You come from a country and a wild Western State where you have no laws," so ran the indictment. "You don't understand what laws are or what they are made for. Don't you know there is a war?" "It seems to me," replied Sperry softly, "that I have heard of it." "Heard of it!" Major B. exploded. "I think we have heard of it. We have lost a million men."

Maverick was one of the last men to be recalled from his North of France post. Jokingly he told the German officers that he was thinking of trying to get a commission in the British army. "Don't do that," they said; "if you must do something, try for one in the French army. Then we might possibly be friends again some time in the future." One day when the crisis was

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becoming acute, Maverick imparted a confidence to his officer. With a perfectly straight face he told him that he had received information that the Government at Washington had decided to recall the United States Consul to Hoboken. Although he had lived some years in England—perhaps by reason of that—and had crossed the Atlantic, the officer received the news with perfect gravity. “The step,” he acknowledged, “indicates the seriousness of the situation.” As hours passed, however, his countenance took on a puzzled look. He maintained a persistent, almost gloomy, silence. He communed wonderingly with himself. Sometime in the afternoon of the following day a light broke over his face. “I have just discovered,” he said, “that the United States Consul to Hoboken is a joke.”

Entering the Representatives Room in the offices it would be often to find one of

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the chairs occupied by a uniform. The face would be that of a stranger. The stiff introduction announced the visitor as Ritt Meister Blank or Oberlieutenant Dash. That was another matter. At times the smile was hard to restrain. There flashed a dozen details of description, quotations of conversation, imparted to me of evenings before the inadequate hearth fire of No. 126. It might be Fletcher's officer, the one with whom "Luke" had spent four months at Longwy, and made that trip into Germany, the hero of such and such an episode in the Hotel Adlon in Berlin. Again the scrutinizing monocle and the highly extended hand brought to mind "Oh, you are the guy they describe as all right from your head up and from your feet down." Or the mental observation would be "Well, you certainly don't look as if you hated yourself, but Phil Potter says that you are not

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such a bad sort, and if Phil Potter says that, I will reserve judgment." The situation was one where the American delegate, especially when, as in my case, he was a late arrival, was always at a decided advantage. There was one officer, met this way, who insisted on talking during the ten minutes we were alone together, of Canada and the obvious opportunities of the United States in that direction. Why had we not taken advantage of them. England's hands were busy, the Dominion heavily weakened, such a chance might never come again. When I told him that one old woman with a broomstick at the frontier would be ample military protection for Canada so far as any aggression on the part of the United States was concerned, he looked at me sharply, and changed the subject. I was either deep, or an utter fool.

There are certain ones among the German

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officers that I met that I particularly recall. At headquarters, Major B. and Captain S., the latter a little man with searching, suspicious eyes, perhaps made so by his scrutiny of every new American delegate who came in. There was Graf von M., of the Prussian branch of the famous Austrian family. He was extremely handsome, of a Rupert of Hentzau type, and perhaps personally the German officer in Brussels the most hated by the Belgians. Among his exploits was the having sent to prison in Germany for three months two young girls belonging to excellent Belgian families. He had tried to speak to them on the street one evening and they had referred to him as a *sale Boche*. There was the monocled Captain Graf von G., typically Prussian in his *morgue*. There was Captain N., in former days one of the heads of the Hamburg-American office in London. He had an English wife, and chil-

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dren, with whom he had had no communication since July, 1914. There was Captain W., himself half English and cursing England with a vehemence that singled him out even among men whose souls were so attuned to the Hymn of Hate. There was Captain B., he of the duck legs, the pleasantest memory of all, of whom more later. There was Oberlieutenant L., who was to take us out of Belgium, across Germany, and deliver us over to Swiss soil. There was Oberlieutenant F., dancing and debonair. I can see him now, executing that jig step in the great dining room of the Palace Hotel our last night in Brussels. Also I know what the morning brought—what so many other mornings had brought. He would wake up in bed with nothing on but his Hussar boots. Remorse and good resolutions would be born of the aching head and the trembling fingers. He would reach out for

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the handglass that was always with him, and studying the reflection with melancholy eyes would murmur, "Finkey, Finkey, you naughty Hun!"

Not everywhere had the invaders penetrated. There were great houses in the provinces that had been spared, and at which many of the American delegates were royally entertained. There were house parties in the Ardennes, in Limbourg, in Luxembourg. The element of romance was not entirely lacking. One or two of the Americans had acquired Belgian wives. At the time of our departure there were engagements in the air. One of the weekly meetings in the Brussels office was held at a time when the complications due to the severance of relations impaired our future usefulness in the work, but when it was not yet a certainty that there would be actual war. The Director, outlining the general situation,

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pointed out the necessity of leaving the country, but added, with a meaning smile, that if there were any men who for personal reasons wished to stay behind they were to tell him privately. Two or three delegates with exceedingly guilty countenances were the only ones who did not participate in the laughter. To the everlasting credit of the C. R. B. it is to be recorded that, with one or two exceptions, very early in the war, neither Belgian hospitality nor Belgian confidences was ever abused. With a sense of absolute security a host would impart to his American guests information that divulged would have meant for him a German prison or worse. He would have been far more guarded with a Belgian who did not belong to his own intimate circle. On these Belgians of wealth and position the burden of the war had been heavy. But the first sympathy is not for them. They managed to

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continue to live in material comfort. Arrowsmith, dining in a country house, expressed his appreciation of a certain wine. "I suppose," he said, "that you have very little of it left." The host shook his head sadly. "Unfortunately, there remain but ten thousand bottles."

The lot of the Belgians of the higher classes would have been easier, the restrictions fewer, had they been willing to receive the invaders socially. "I have brought my evening clothes," explained many a young German officer, his first day in the household on which he was billeted. He was pained and puzzled at the lack of response. The German officers were always wondering why the Belgians did not like them. They had been received in Belgian houses before the war. Why should such a triviality as an invasion make any difference? The American in H. G. Wells's "Mr. Britling Sees It

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Through" said that he had always considered war as a kind of game in which two picked teams did the fighting while other people looked on. To listen to many of the German officers you would have thought that this war had been conducted that way. They talked about its end as of the finish of a knightly joust, carried out with all courtesy and ceremony, after which victor and vanquished sit down for wassail at the groaning board. "If it were over to-morrow I would be in Paris in a week. I have not been there since 1911. I want to see the boulevards and eat *filet of sole a la Marguery* at Marguery's," said one. Others liked to picture themselves in Regent Street of Piccadilly in the near future, no longer as conquerors, but as welcome guests. All expected to take up the threads of cosmopolitan life as they were before August, 1914. They could not understand why the French

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did not like them. "Do you think that you and the French will ever be friends?" I once rather maliciously asked the best of them, Captain B. He shook his head rather sadly. "I am afraid not, and we have always wanted to be friends with them, and have tried so hard." And he believed it!

They were puzzled by America's lack of sympathy. They wanted explanations and nagged in their persistence. There were times when the strain of silence was hard. "I wish," said Fletcher of California, after long restraint, "that you wouldn't talk the way you do about our President. You haven't heard me say anything about the Kaiser. And, after all, we elected our President, while you had your Kaiser wished on you." Brand Whitlock told me that again and again those questions "Why don't your people like us? Why are you not on our side?" had been thrust on him. Finally

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one day he spoke out: "Because you seem to have the faculty of always doing the wrong thing, just what will grate and hurt the most. Take the *Lusitania*, for example. It was the one ship not flying the American flag that you should have not selected for destruction if you wished to retain our friendship. No other transatlantic liner of England or France would have been the same. You might have sunk the *Mauretania*, the *Lusitania*'s twin sister, without rousing half the feeling. But the *Lusitania* had been always regarded as sentimentally an American boat. Every traveling American had crossed on her or had relatives or close friends who had done so. The torpedo that sent her to the bottom of the Irish sea struck us to the heart."

The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg has been, since August, 1914, subjected to the annoyances and hardships of war, but not to

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its horrors. Possessing a standing army only slightly larger than the standing army that was cuffed and kicked by Namgay Doola in the Kipling story, it formally protested against the passage of the Germans. Without undue violence a platoon of the gray-green clad men lifted the standing army blocking the road over the hedge into an adjoining field, and after a few seconds' delay, the hosts of the Kaiser marched on. Luxembourg bowed to the inevitable. Had not the protest saved the national honor? The occupation was irksome, residences "borrowed" for the use of invaders of exalted rank had been left in a state positively indescribable, but there was very little looting, and no burning or bloodshed. To Luxembourg the German officers were always pointing as an example of what Belgium's lot would have been had it yielded to German demands. Once our Minister to the

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Hague, Dr. Henry Van Dyke, paid a visit to the Grand Duchy. With that almost child-like eagerness for praise that is curiously characteristic, the Germans angled for his expressions of approval. Finally came the direct question. "What do the people have to say of the behavior of our soldiers?"

"It is not," replied Dr. Van Dyke with icy politeness, "to your behavior that they object. It is to your presence."

To one fault the German authorities seemed to be charitably lenient. Months before my arrival in Belgium there had been a row involving one of the C. R. B. delegates. I never knew the details of the episode, but for a time it threatened to end very seriously for the American. The Minister hurried to Headquarters in the hope of smoothing over the affair. But there was the doctrine of blood and iron in the smashing of the heavy fist on the table. "He has

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a German officer insulted. To prison he must go. It is a *chose jugée*." Finally, to Mr. Whitlock it seemed as if the last card had been played, that further pleading would be a waste of precious time. He rose to leave. "The fact is," he conceded, "the young man was drunk." Over the hard, set face of the German there came a change. The jaw relaxed into something like a smile. "Why did you not acquaint me with that important—that exceedingly important fact before?" he asked. "Now I understand. Young men must have their pleasure. If he was drunk it is another matter. To prison he shall not go."

III

MORE GERMAN OFFICERS

THE German officers as well as the German soldiers were frank in their expressions of disappointment at the failure of the Kaiser's peace overtures. They maintained that the war was really over, that Germany had won it, that the crushing of Roumania was the *coup de grâce*. It was only the criminal obstinacy of the Entente Allies that was prolonging the bloodshed. Provoked Germany had dealt the blow in self-defense. The Kaiser was the most peace-loving man in the world. There never would have been any war had it not been for the scheming of British tradesmen, jealous of the rising German power and

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commerce. The destruction of Louvain and other cities in Belgium and the North of France was justified. The Generals of Louis XIV had burned villages in the Palatinate. "But that was more than two hundred years ago." "True, but to understand Germany, you must think in centuries."

Of course it was impossible to know just how deep and widespread was the actual spirit of unrest among the German officers and men. One day in March, Meert of the Brabant Department, appeared at the luncheon table with a curious story. In the tram that had brought him to the office there had been a German private, the only uniform in the car. He was drunk, maudlinly and sentimentally drunk. He was exceedingly anxious to impart his sorrows and his disappointments to the Belgians about him. So in French, with a very German flavor, he kept repeating over and over: "*Le Kaiser*

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a dit que nous sommes victorieuse. Ce n'est pas vrai. Nous sommes foutus." "The Kaiser says that we are victorious. It is not true. We are done for."

One of the C. R. B. men in touch with Antwerp—was it Gardner Richardson—was in that city when the news of the Russian revolution came. At a near-by table in the restaurant where he was dining was a group of middle aged German officers. There came in to join them a very much excited young officer waving a German newspaper and pointing to the head lines. But instead of the expected enthusiasm he was greeted with grumpy silence. "What is the matter? Are you not pleased with the news?" asked the newcomer. "Pleased"! grumbled one of the older men. "Why should we be pleased? The first thing you know we will be seeing that kind of thing in Berlin."

From the military point of view, the Ger-

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man officers were profoundly impressed by General Nivelle's Verdun attack of last autumn, when the French, in the space of fifty minutes, retook what the Germans had won by five months of incessant labor and the sacrifice of hundreds of thousands of lives. It was to them the action of the war, but they ascribed it partially to luck, and were sure that it would never recur, for, they said, there has never been before and there could never be again such marvelous coördination between the infantry, the artillery and the air forces. "Our men were powerless, overwhelmed, they could do nothing but surrender." Later I was to hear this verdict corroborated from the other side, from the lips of American Ambulance drivers in Paris. The French infantry, the Americans said, really had nothing to do except to direct the prisoners to the rear. Their airmen and their guns had made resistance impossible.

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The very ease of the advance was the cause of the only losses. The men unintentionally disobeyed orders. They were told to stop at a certain point, but in their eagerness they went beyond. Many of them fell under the firing of their own artillery.

Of all the German officers with whom the men of the C. R. B. were thrown in contact, unquestionably the most genuinely liked was Captain B. The eighteenth of last February three or four of us with B. were lunching in the Taverne Royale. After many toasts, we pledged to meet for an early morning supper at Jack's in New York February 18th, 1918. I have often wondered since if that appointment is kept just what will the conditions be. Every one who had been associated with B. spoke of his fairness and his kindness. He had something of the politeness of the heart. Under his good manners you never detected the

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sneer. I am sure it was not there. In that he was the exception. But despite his uniform, of which he was immensely vain,—the girls in the Bodegas used to amuse themselves hugely playing upon his weakness,—and the clanking sword which was too long for his short legs, and over which he was always stumbling, he never gave the impression of being a soldier. War did not disturb him much, at least not after the middle of the day. The ten o'clock in the morning bottle of champagne had started him on the road to complete beatitude. Reënforcements were constantly coming up. By two or three o'clock in the afternoon he was dreaming that he was in Paris, sipping a liqueur at the corner table of the Café de la Paix, and looking down the Avenue of the Opera. Leach of California was the delegate at one time stationed in Lille. B. was his officer. The city was too near the

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English guns and they lived at Tournai. Leach used to say that one of his most exacting duties was, when they were riding together in the motor, nudging B. in the ribs in order to inform him when to return a salute. There would be an automatic stiffening up, the hand would go to the helmet, then drop, and in a second the officer would again be in a peaceful, happy slumber. Once an opera company from Berlin played in the Lille Opera House. The first night the German officers attended in a body. The English, eight or ten miles away, had learned of the performance, and dropped a shell within a hundred yards of the theater. Captain B. invited Leach to attend the performance for the second night. Leach promptly accepted the invitation. All day long the officer amused himself by picturing the possible, or probable, explosion. It was to be wrought, of course, by a shell made in

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America. "I drink to that shell," he said again and again. By the time the curtain went up, he had passed away to a realm beyond the reach of worry. "He was smiling in his sleep. There I sat by his side in the box, the only civilian in the house, waiting every minute for the crash to come." In Paris, one morning in April, Leach called to me from a table as I was passing the Café de la Paix. He was greatly pleased. He had got what he wanted—Leach was a surgeon—a position with the American Hospital Corps that would enable him to go up close behind the British and French fronts. He would now have an opportunity given to few men. He would see the same country that he had seen before but this time from the other side of the fighting line. As he talked of his prospects, his face broke into a whimsical smile. He explained: "I just want to see B.'s little duck legs scampering

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in my direction. I want to hear him crying
'Kameraden! Kameraden!' Sure I'll give
him the glad hand."

IV

BEYOND THE MAGIC DOOR—WAR BOOKS AND OTHERS—THE OLD AFFICHES

PERHAPS some of the happiest hours in Belgium were those evenings beyond the magic door, when the temperature was in a comparatively kindly mood, when only one or two of us were at home, and we could browse among the bookshelves that lined three sides of the living room of No. 126. There were the heavily bound books of the owner of the house, books in three languages denoting his cosmopolitanism of taste, and there were the accumulations of two years of American occupation. Many times, in many places, I had pored over the pages of "Vanity Fair." Now, to take

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down from a shelf the "novel without a hero" in gorgeous binding, to turn to certain familiar chapters, brought a new sensation. I re-read the pages describing the great ball on the eve of the battle of Waterloo, the lines describing how William Dobbin tried to drag George Osborne away from the rout, whispering "The enemy has crossed the Sambre. Our left is already engaged. We are to march in three hours." That very morning perhaps, I had, accompanying Sperry, climbed the actual staircase of the scene, past men of the German *Landsturm*, and lines of waiting Belgians. The quaint, awkward drawing in Thackeray's own hand showed Major and Mrs. O'Dowd at the flower market in the Grand Place. By hardly a stone the square of June, 1815, differed from the square I had thrice crossed, that same day, almost one hundred and two years later. My eyes were skimming the

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sentences telling how, through the open windows, came a dull distant sound over the sun lighted roofs to the southward, how "God defend us, it's cannon"! Mrs. O'Dowd cried, and how a thousand pale and anxious faces might be seen looking from other casements. The reading was interrupted. Leach, sitting six feet away, had laid down his own book. "Listen," he said. "Did you catch that? It's the third time this evening I've heard the guns around Lille."

There were on the shelves the solid tomes of history and poetry, which did not receive any great amount of attention; there were on the table heavy atlases, and sprawling across the most comfortable sofas loose maps, on which we moved about little paper pins, indicating the changes in Roumania, Persia, and on the Russian, Italian, and Western fronts of which the latest news received had apprised us. There were the

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piles of copies of London "Punch," the latest issue one of July, 1914. There was a varied collection of French novels, with rather luridly illustrated covers, books of the type of the sprightly "Famille Cardinal," which would introduce to American readers a M. Ludovic Halévy surprisingly different from the one they know as the author of "L. Abbé Constantin." But there was one set of little books which drew us back from the happier past to the grim realities of the present.

There were two books that I had read at home in the earlier days of the war that dealt, in what might be called the Jules Verne manner, with Germanic dreams and aspirations of conquest. One was "*Frankreich's Ende in Jahre 19—*," published in 1912, and the other "Hindenberg's March into London," which is said to have sold four million copies in Germany in a few months.

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Those books had reminded one of Frank R. Stockton's "The Great War Syndicate." They were so different. Mr. Stockton's book dealt with an imaginary war between Great Britain and the United States, ending in a decisive American triumph. The tale was designed simply to amuse, but its wide popularity was of real significance. It sold because it was the kind of a book that reflected accurately the martial ambitions of the American people. It showed our cause just. It showed us rising to a great emergency. It showed us ultimately victorious. Best of all it showed us great in victory. We exacted no tribute. We burned no cities. We obliterated no province. We inflicted no humiliation on a gallant foe. We implanted no heritage of hate.

It would take too long to describe in detail the two German books mentioned. Briefly, the first tells of an imaginary war as a re-

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sult of which France is absorbed by its conquerors and the French race exterminated. A dispute about a railroad in Morocco, complicated by a "Maine" incident, leads Germany to declare war. The French armies are everywhere easily crushed. Montpellier is burned to the ground, and Orleans, after capture, is made to look like a "dead ruin of the Middle Ages." After Paris is taken the terms offered by the victors are so humiliating that the desperate people make a final but unorganized struggle. Germany proclaims the annexation of France, and puts in force martial law, which daily leads to the shooting of hundreds of rebels. The women and children who take part in the desperate struggle to remove the yoke are deported by thousands to Cayenne and other penal colonies.

"Frankreich's Ende in Jahre 19—" was published two years before the first German

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soldier saw, or imagined, the first sniper in eastern Belgium. "Hindenberg's March into London" must be judged more leniently, for it was born in the fever of hate. It describes an invasion of England and the subjugation of that country by the Kaiser's armies, and his fleets of the sea and air. As an expression of the national ambitions of author and readers it is not a book to which one could in strict justice object. A German picturing the spiked helmets masters in Trafalgar Square is fair play. That prisoners are often lined up against a wall and shot is hard, but it is war. It is the bloody licking of the lips that amazes the American mind. The tragedy of Louvain is extolled. "The heart of England will not be instructed even by the fate of Belgium," a German Major, a hero, instructs his soldiers, "we shall repeat the lesson of Louvain." In a battle before London the order

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to take no prisoners is explained, "When fighting bestial, snarling scum the German soldier observes only the laws of the hunt of beasts of prey."

The two books came to me through the medium of English translation. I can not be certain that the original text had not in places been twisted and distorted. They are entitled to every benefit of the doubt. But on one of the library shelves of the house at 126 Avenue Louise there was a set of books containing evidence impossible to controvert or to discredit. The little volumes, in which are collected the experiences of German officers and soldiers in Belgium and Northern France, carry the imprint of the Imperial German Government. The seal of official Germany is on the occasional amazing and hideous confession that confirms the spirit of the Bryce Report if any such confirmation is necessary. "As we

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were passing through S. shots were fired by the inhabitants. One of our soldiers was wounded. We entered and searched some of the houses. In one of them we found an old woman trying to hide under a bed. One of our men ran her through with his bayonet. These people must be taught a lesson." There is no distortion in that translation. "But why," I asked in astonishment, "do they even let those things be printed?" The reply was a shrug. "Son, we have been here longer than you have. We have given up trying to understand the workings of the German mind."

Then there were the *affiches* of the past, infinitely more interesting reading than the *affiches* of the hour. There was almost a complete set of these papers on the shelves of the library at No. 126. Day by day they had told the story of the war as the Germans had wished it told to the people of the in-

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vaded country. If the *communiqué* of the morning happened to be particularly depressing, if it suggested that the Entente cause was collapsing at all points; to bring reassurance it was necessary only to take down from the shelves the documents relating to what has become since known as the Battle of the Marne. There was the ring of sincerity in the exultant sentences recording the beginning of that conflict. Everywhere the German arms triumphant. The handful of British flung into the sea. The French crumpled up, receding in hopeless panic. The capture of Paris only a matter of hours. Then there came a subtle change in tone. The battle was still raging. The Kaiser's armies were displaying a heroism unparalleled in history. All was going well. The Russians had been defeated in a great battle. With the issue of every new *communiqué* the Eastern front assumed a

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greater importance; the battlefield of the west to be shrouded in deeper obscurity. But reading in the dusk of a midwinter day I could see through the veil that, thirty months before, had been drawn before Belgian eyes. There was Joffre, flinging out his General Order announcing that the retreat was at an end. There were Gallieni's men being rushed from Paris in taxi-cabs. There was the new French army striking unexpectedly in on Von Kluck's right, causing the eventual attenuation of the German line, like an elastic stretched too thin. There was Foch, sending to Headquarters his laconic message "My right wing is shattered. My left wing is in retreat. I am attacking with my center"; and later, perceiving the moment of dislocation in the enemy's line, ordering the advance that drove the Prussian Guard into the marshes. Then, the gray-green host in retreat, with the bark-

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ing "seventy-fives" whipping them onward. In a similar vein, in other old *affiches*, was the story of Verdun. It would be difficult to say how many thousand bottles of wine were consumed by German officers in Brussels celebrating the announced fall of the citadel.

V

LOUVAIN: THIRTY MONTHS LATER

ONE German headquarters was in what had been the Hotel Bellevue et Flandre near the Royal Palace. In that hotel I had stayed at the time of my first and only previous visit to Brussels many years before. Little had I dreamed then what the purpose of my next visit to the edifice was to be. When, a few days after arrival, I was to pass before the official scrutiny, Sperry advised me. "They want to give you the 'once over,' " was the way that he expressed it. "It is not necessary for you to let them know that you have written anything. They shy at the idea of writers on the Commission. When they asked me what you

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did at home I said I understood that you were some kind of a business man." I understood. So after having been inspected stiffly by Major B., who, assuring me of his high regret at his inability to grant me an audience, turned me over to Captain S., I quite truthfully informed the latter that for many years previous to volunteering for the relief work, I had been connected with a business house that had its offices at Fourth Avenue and Thirtieth Street in New York City.

As a result of that inspection, I was provided, some days later, with an official yellow document. It was my certificate of permission to ride in a motor car on any road in the Brabant province. Beyond the borders of the province I could not go. But Brabant is the heart of Belgium, and within its confines were enacted some of the most stirring and terrible scenes in the tragic

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August of 1914. The memory of some of those scenes seems to be seared into the brains of many of those who witnessed the coming of the invaders. Americans who in other days visited the Battlefield of Waterloo may recall a little hotel at the junction of the roads at Braine L'Alleud, about a mile from the Lion Monument. The building is either the one occupied by Victor Hugo when he was planning the marvelous description of the battle that is incorporated in "Les Miserables," or it is the building next to it. The first Sunday in March, 1917, Curtis and Leach, bound by motor for Charleroi, dropped me at what is popularly known as the Battlefield of Waterloo—the village of Waterloo two or three miles nearer Brussels, actually had nothing to do with the battle—and after two hours of walking I sat down for a brief rest in the Braine L'Alleud hotel. It was a voluble proprietor who

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greeted me, deploring the lack of custom, the inability to procure food to sell or even to eat, the general unkindness of fate. When he paused for lack of breath I asked him if he had seen the Germans come. Instantly his demeanor changed. Into his eyes crept reminiscent fear. As he described he acted the scene. "Listen, Monsieur. I had hidden everything in the cellar. I had closed all the doors and windows, and was looking out through the slits in the shutters. Like this. Here. They came down that road. I could see them rounding the turn. They crossed the square. With their gun butts they pounded on the door. They cried 'Open.' Oh! Mon Dieu!" In the narrative the man's face had become wet with the sweat of panic.

With Louis the chauffeur as my guide, I traveled over many roads to the east, north and west. There was not a town, or the

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charred ruin of what had once been a town, of which Louis did not know the recent history. His former employers having fled before the invasion and sought refuge in England, Louis had been absorbed into the service of the C. R. B. From time to time, in a Brussels street or along a country road, a *Landsturm* man would step out, displaying a red flag. It was the demand to see our papers. "*Sale Boche!*" Louis would growl, twirling his blond mustache and bringing the car to a stop. There was a world of meaning in Louis's "*Sale Boche!*"

Louvain, I have found, has an appeal to many thousand Americans to whom the names of other stricken Belgian cities are unknown. "Did you go to Louvain and is it really true?" have been among the first questions. How do I know? I was not there August 19, 1914, the day the Germans entered, nor was I there the night of August

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25, when the Beast broke loose. I did not see the red reflection in the sky, or the civilians being led to execution, or the soldiers punishing snipers, according to the German version, or, in blind panic, replying to one another's volleys, which is the claim of the Belgians. I can say that I was in Louvain for the first time March 10, 1917, and that I saw the evidence of a work masterly in its system. Whatever I may believe I don't know whose work it was. Perhaps Belgium stole the watch, and, the car being crowded, slipped it in the Kaiser's pocket.

We entered Louvain through a narrow, ill-paved street of the poorer section, swung into the Rue de Bruxelles, past the Hotel de Ville, then along the Rue de la Station to the railway station; thus bisecting the city. We circled the boulevard southward for a distance, and then turned in again through the tortuous streets. Had the evidence

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been allowed to remain as a permanent warning? The charred ruins were left as they were when the ashes first grew cold. The few new structures that had been erected, near the railway station, were of what might be termed the Coney Island school of architecture. Of course no one thinks of taking the chance of rebuilding in an enduring form. In the center of a blighted street a single house absolutely unscarred. "Une maison allemande," Louis would explain. The Church of St. Pierre, the University, once the most famous in Europe, with its library filled with precious manuscript had been consumed by the flames. The late Richard Harding Davis, in his description of the burning of Louvain, pictured General Lutwitz, in pantomime sweeping his hand across the table and saying: "The Hotel de Ville was a beautiful building. It is a pity it must be destroyed."

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But it was not destroyed. Untouched, unscarred, it stands to-day, the sole important survivor of that night of horrors.

VI

“TO UNDERSTAND GERMANY”

WHAT were the relations existing between the German officers in Belgium and the occupied French departments, and the C. R. B. men with whom they were often so much and so long in contact? How did they get along? I do not think that it was ever possible for the German to understand the American, or the American the German. There are probably to-day many officers who, recalling the association, are perfectly convinced of their own great personal popularity with the delegates. “Unless they are absolute ingrates and barbarians it can not possibly be otherwise,” is the probable line of mental argument. “Did I not treat him with high es-

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teem? Was I not always correct in my deportment? Naturally I took the bedroom and the office, and gave him the camp couch and wooden table in the hall. Anything but the best would be unbecoming an officer bearing His Majesty's commission. Did we not together consume oh, so many bottles of wine?" All of which is perfectly true. It was not at American suffering that he had displayed such callous indifference. The stricken street through which the motor car raced was not one of a village of New England or Virginia. Outwardly cordial the relations between officer and delegate almost always were. In convivial moments they were even familiar. One pair, after the American's second drink and the German's twentieth, addressed each other as "Cap" and "Lizzie." Had they been shipwrecked men on a remote island they might have become as brothers. But so long as one was

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the product and embodiment of the Prussian military system, and the other was not, there was between them a gulf that it was impossible to bridge.

Some of the delegates told that they had gone into Belgium pro-German, politically at least. Take, as a shining example, the case of the man whom I shall call "Kitt." I here indulge in prophecy, and venture the opinion that he will go far. The time may come when magazines will be urging us to write our "Recollections" of "Kitt" as we knew him in the Bottle. "What an amazing amount of ill-digested knowledge he possesses" was my comment after two evenings' acquaintance. I used the adjective in no sense of disparagement, but because I did not think that it was humanly possible for a man of his age—"Kitt" was about twenty-six—to have absorbed so much and to have assimilated it. But, "The rest stands, but I

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want to take back that 'ill-digested,' " was my retraction of a week later. In No. 126 Kitt was our translator. The only trouble that the *Belgique* gave us was an occasional word and the atrocious quality of the type and ink. But the *Rotterdamische Courier* or the German sheet that came to the house, was turned over formally to "Kitt" with the admonition to "Go to it!" The Dutch newspaper was an excellent one. Some mornings it was not to be found in the box. We were at once disappointed and pleased; for that indicated that there was news of the world that the occupying military authorities did not want known in Belgium. Had there been newspapers in other languages than Dutch and German, I am sure there would have been no hesitation on "Kitt's" part. He was always so amiably ready; he needed so little urging; that somehow, after a time, we ceased to be appreciative.

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We even began to wonder if he was sufficiently grateful. After all, were we not supplying him with an audience? In addition to the newspapers that were delivered at the house, there were many others. "Kitt's" appetite for print was insatiable. In the course of some days he collected a copy of every journal that reached Brussels. The rights of the street kiosks and railway stands had been sold to a German company, and German girls had been sent to Belgium to take charge of them. "Kitt's" favorite diversion was infuriating these girls by asking them, in pretended innocence, if they understood any German.

A University of California man, "Kitt" had been a "Rhodes" scholar at Oxford about to depart with an expedition for research of some kind in the Near East when the war came. Perhaps it was just a touch of intellectual intolerance natural to youth,

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and soon to be outgrown, that had been responsible for his early sentiments. The reasons for an American to be anti-Prussian were too obvious. The violation of Belgium, and the behavior of the invaders on Belgium soil, the aggression upon France. These were the arguments at the disposal of the man in the street. It behooved the dispassionate historian to ignore them and to go deeper. So "Kitt" looked beyond; he saw Germany baulked in her scheme for the Bagdad railway, he saw German merchants subtly discriminated against in Morocco, while the English and French were playing into each other's hands, he saw a British tyranny over the seas which, if benevolent, was no less a tyranny. That was the "Kitt" who went into Belgium; it was not the "Kitt" of the winter and spring of 1917. What he felt in the later days was reflected in his face when he told the pathetic story

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of the farthest flung outposts of the C. R. B., the group of great hearted French women, who, through the long months, had remained in their village within sight of the spire of Rheims Cathedral, in hourly peril from the French guns, in order to take care of the little children.

Personally I do not for a moment pretend that I was ever strictly neutral. I do not see how neutrality of feeling on the part of an American was ever humanly possible. But I do say that, never since the beginning of the war, had I ever been so nearly neutral; never had my sentiments towards the German nation been so kindly, as in the autumn of 1916, on the eve of my departure. In the first place I had given to the Commission for Relief in Belgium my pledge of neutrality of speech and action, and I meant to keep that pledge honestly. Then the hot indignation roused by the events of August,

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1914, the passionate bitterness at the murder of the peaceful Americans sent down with the *Lusitania*, had been softened by the passage of time. The German government's plan of ruthless indiscriminate under-sea warfare was then not to be suspected. "You will probably," Will Irwin said to me one day, "be paired off in some small town with a German officer. If you are lucky you will find him a very decent chap, who will be just as earnest as you are in the work of getting food for the people for whom you will be responsible." From other sources I heard stories indicating the cordial relations that often existed between the American delegates and their companions in the Kaiser's gray-green. One American had been taken on a trip down the Rhine. In another case a German officer, about to be married, carried his American back with him through the lines, to act as his best man. I

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have a very good club friend who, coming to this country many years ago, as a member of the stock company of the German theater in Irving Place, New York, soon acquired a perfect command of English, and in time became one of the most highly esteemed actors of the English speaking stage. "I hope," he said one evening a few days before I sailed, "that what you see in Belgium will make you come back with feelings of real kindness for my people." Then and there I gave him my word that I would do my best to try to understand them sympathetically. Scrupulously I refused to take part in any conversation based on hostility to the German cause. As an American neutral going to Belgium, the spirit of *noblesse oblige* demanded that. If there was any C. R. B. delegate who did less I never knew him. Some of them, as has been said, even went in to the Bottle pro-German. But no

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American delegate of my time ever came out of Belgium pro-German. And that, I think, constitutes a tremendous indictment.

"To understand Germany you must think in centuries," were the words with which all adverse criticism was swept away. Often the words were emphasized with the heavily banging fist. I came to understand the point of view; but I always wanted to offer a slight amendment. To my mind it should have been: "To understand the Germans you must always keep the centuries in mind." You must see the marvelous organization of the twentieth century obedient to the conscience, the morals, the ideals of the thirteenth or fourteenth. You must understand the vastness of the gulf across which the "High Well Born" once glanced at the peasant, and the latter's unquestioning, ox-like acceptance of the position assigned him. "What are to be the future duties of the peo-

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ple of the conquered districts—of Poland, Belgium, and Northern France?” was a question of 1915. It was the voice of the German professor that framed the reply. “To pay taxes to the Imperial Government, to serve in the army, and to keep their jaws tight shut.” Precisely the idea of Frederick the Great and of his military mad father, that monarch whose agents went about Europe beguiling or kidnaping likely looking men for his Guard.

At times there came glimpses that carried back beyond the wars of Frederick, beyond the age of established Feudal customs, of robber barons of the Rhine, of adventure seeking knights in shining armor. One day in March the search for certain missing freight cars carried me to Scharbeek station, to Haren Nord, to Ricquier, to the Meunerie Bruxelloise, to the Trois Fontaines, and finally to the Usine Duché. The ar-

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rival at the last named mill was just in time to see a sound demonstration of practical requisitioning. The Germans happened to need freight cars and learned that there were cars in the sidings of the Usine Duché. There was no delaying red tape. An under officer with twenty soldiers was sent to the task. As the motor car wound in among the buildings, from round the corner came the sounds of impact and splintering wood. Beneath the weight of the gun butts the heavy gate gave away like *papier mâché*. The startled undermanager rushed forward appealingly and protestingly. Above his head a half dozen gun butts swung menacingly. Bayonets gleamed in the direction of his subordinates. Then the manager caught sight of the C. R. B. ensign flying from the car, and rushed forward to register exerted complaint. "With his own eyes Monsieur the American delegate had seen it all. He

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could bear witness that there had been no resistance. It was hard. But one must submit, since they were the stronger. But why had they not waited until the gate could be opened? Why the destruction of property? Why had they been about to strike him? Would I report it at Headquarters? Would I inform the American Minister? Would I spread the news in all the neutral countries?" It was a very much agitated, violently gesticulating Belgian. To sooth him I promised much, though I foresaw the smiling shrug; the "I don't see that we can do anything," that would meet my story. The invaders were rolling away the cars, chattering to one another, and leering mockingly in our direction. There was something in the faces that suggested the inheritance from the remote past, that brought a mental picture of hordes of skin-clad men, swarming out of the mysterious East, to

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overrun Western Europe, and to beat at the
very gates of Imperial Rome.

Here, too, one time, the pallid nuns
Called on the Saints in timorous trust,
While from the hills the ape-faced Huns
Grinned with the joy of blood and lust.

VII

UNDER THE YOKE—THE “LIBRE BELGIQUE”—
VILLALOBAR—THE COMING OF THE DONS
—DISCRETION

WHAT are regarded as afflictions sometimes prove to be blessings in disguise. Standing on the platform of a Brussels tram surrounded by German officers, I often awoke to a realization that I was trying desperately to hum the “Marseillaise” or “Tipperary.” Puzzled and suspicious eyes were turned towards me, but in that utter inability to carry any kind of a tune that had been a life-long regret, there was safety. The morning of March 17th I had a bright idea. Carrying it out, I hunted through the rooms of 126 until I found a spool of green ribbon of the proper shade.

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I would carry it to the office, snip it up into little pieces so that we might all carry out the American tradition of doing honor to St. Patrick. Luckily I went by motor, and luckily my overcoat was drawn tight over the ribbon in my own buttonhole. "No, thank you," they said at the office, "we are not hankering after the inside of a German prison. Don't you know that the green ribbon in Belgium is the sign of *espérance* (hope) and that the wearing of it is punished by the most oppressive measures?" It had been so since that day July 21st, 1916, the anniversary of Belgian independence, when Cardinal Mercier came from Malines to celebrate high mass in Sainte Gudule. The wearing of the national colors was strictly forbidden. But almost every person in the multitude which thronged the Cathedral and the adjacent streets had a bit of green ribbon—the symbol of hope—or an ivy leaf—

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symbol of endurance. Then, too, for the first time in many long months, the "Brabanconne" was sung. The song cost the city of Brussels a million marks. But, as many a Belgian said, it was worth it.

Since the occupation, there has appeared from time to time in Belgium a paper known as the *Libre Belgique*. Rewards were offered, the most extensive system of espionage was essayed, but the occupying authorities were never able to discover the place where it was printed, or who were its responsible editors and publishers. Death was the penalty for any one convicted of having a hand in its making; two years in a German prison for being caught in possession of the copy. Yet the *Libre Belgique* continued to appear blithely. One day its front page showed General von Bissing studying the sheet attentively and exclaiming, "Here is where I get the real news." Tales were told

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of Belgians who in hours of assumed friendliness plied German officers with huge draughts of liquid hospitality and then sent them reeling home through the streets with copies of the forbidden publication pinned to their military coat-tails. One day a Belgian, the head of a great mill, presented me with a copy of *Libre Belgique*. It was his last copy. The next morning the authorities descended upon him and made a thorough search. For four uneasy days I carried that paper. Then my nerve gave out. At first you were revolted at what appears to be the whimpering hypocrisy of the Belgian press. Then you realized that it is not Belgian at all, that every word in *La Belgique* in the morning and the *Bruxellois* in the evening was dictated by the German censor. Strangest of all were the letters purporting to come from the deported *chômeurs*. Were it not for the element of

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pathos they would be uproariously funny. "How happy we are among the dear, kind Germans," was the refrain. "We never knew what real contentment was before. We are so sorry for our poor brothers who have not yet been deported. We hope, for their sake, to see them soon."

More interesting than the newspapers were the *affiches* issued day by day from the presses of the occupying military authorities. They contained the Berlin *communiqués* telling of the progress of the war on the western and eastern fronts and announcing any new regulations required for the local government. These regulations mostly had to do with new methods of requisitioning. Before Belgium had seemed a land milked dry, a land from which most of the cows had been driven, and where the only horses were the diseased or the aged. I heard of a Belgian horse-dealer whose sense of humor proved

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costly. He possessed a steed that was requisitioned. It was a fine looking animal. So long as it was being urged forward it was perfect in stride and action. But when the rider tried to make it back, it fell down. When he turned over the horse the Belgian forgot to mention that peculiarity. Two days later, the officer to whom it had been given came storming for an explanation. "What's the matter with the horse?" asked the Belgian suavely. "Of course I know that it can't back. But when you start to cross the Ysèr you want a horse to go forward. You don't want it to back you all the way to Brussels, do you?" He paid for the pleasantry with three months in prison, but I think he considered it worth the price. As a result of one of the last requisitioning orders we in No. 126 saw the going of the copper and the brass. That was in March. I am wondering what is left now!

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The morning of Monday, February 5th, I glanced at the first page of *La Belgique* after those who happened to gather at the breakfast table had seen it. "There is nothing new," they said, but after a few minutes' study I protested. I said I was not so sure. I thought that I had a hunch. "Why should the *St. Louis* be putting back into port?" I asked, and pointed to one or two other paragraphs that impressed me as curious. But the men had lost all respect for my hunches. I had had them too often before. In the office the long figure of Jackson was standing in the middle of the representatives' room. "Well," he said slowly, "we have broken off relations. We heard the news through Holland Saturday night." Not a line of the break appeared in the Belgian papers till the evening of February 6th. Yet the facts were known from one end of the land to the other. The waiters

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were smiling over it in the restaurants and cafés, the barber commented upon it whisperingly in your ear as you were lying back in his chair. Strange and incomprehensible was the effect of that first step and of the events that were to come upon the Belgians. They forgot what it might mean to the *ravitaillement* of which they were so vitally in need. They saw only the entrance of a new ally against the hated oppressor. The hour of deliverance from the yoke seemed so much nearer at hand.

When it became apparent that the hours of our own usefulness were numbered, there was the question of looking about for those who were to be our successors. When the relations between the United States and the Imperial German Government began to be critical, Mr. Whitlock naturally ceased to be first among the representatives of the still neutral countries. His place was taken by

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the Spanish Minister to Belgium, the Marquis de Villalobar. Once, many months ago, the news reached the C. R. B. office that the Germans were about to requisition all the machinery. "That," commented Sperry, "will be exceedingly hard on Villalobar." A remarkable man, Villalobar. In ancient days he would have been exposed as an infant to certain death on a mountain top. He was born practically without legs, but beyond that opinion differs as to whether he is two-thirds or only one-half artificial. But the frail body is dominated by a mind of singular keenness and clarity. He accomplishes progression by means of a complicated machinery which he winds up and operates. The impression is that he is a somewhat indifferent chauffeur. Rumor has it that at times, in shifting from the second to the third forward, he misses his gears and catches the reverse.

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A fortnight or three weeks before the departure from Brussels Villalobar came formally to lunch with us in the Commission's offices. We saw and acclaimed a clever, smiling diplomat, telling of his years of service in Washington, expressing sentiments in keeping with the entwining of the two flags against the wall, the gridiron with the starry field, and the yellow and blood red pavilion of Spain; paying compliments to the broad humanity of the United States, to his highly esteemed colleague the American Minister to Belgium, to the Director who sat by his side. But there were whispered tales that hinted at another Villalobar, rumors of moments of privacy when the iron will and the stubborn pride that enabled him to conceal suffering and physical weakness temporarily deserted him; of strange outbursts when the dependents about him shrank away from his fiery anger. The

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stories may have been quite unfounded; but true or false they somehow filled out the picture. That very morning returning from the mills at Vilvorde I had suggested to Louis increased speed, explaining the need of being in good time for luncheon as the table was to be honored by the presence of the Marquis de Villalobar. At the name Louis's hands left the steering wheel and were tossed eloquently heavenward. "Not for one thousand francs a month would I be his chauffeur! *Il frappe ses domestiques!*" It was a vivid picture that further confidences from Louis conjured up. The mask of unctiousness dropped, the face distorted with fury, the voice shrill with screaming abuse, the blindly lashing cane.

It was in response to Villalobar's call to his countrymen that, late in March, there appeared on the scene five or six young and much bewhiskered Spaniards. There was

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one little personal incident to their coming that can never be forgotten. They had lunched at noon at our offices when only a handful of the Americans was present. Then, in the afternoon, they were directed to take quarters in certain indicated houses. Two of them made their way to No. 126 Avenue Louise, found beds unoccupied, and retired for the night. It happened that several of the Americans living in the house were being entertained at dinner in Belgian homes and returned after drinking many toasts in the small hours of the morning. In the uncereemonious manner usual in the establishment, one of them began prowling around the various rooms. He was soon heard coming down stairs two steps at a time. His eyes were startled and his voice husky. "It was in the bed, right against the pillow, that I saw it!" "What did you see?" "I don't know just what it was, but

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it looked like large bunches of Castilian spinach!" In this way was announced the coming of the Dons.

Allusion has already been made to the necessity for discretion in deportment and above all in discussion, that was constantly being enjoined on us. Even before February 3rd English was not exactly a popular language. Not with people belonging to the occupying nation. Everywhere, in hotel, restaurant, café and theater, were to be seen the gray coats of the officers. Even more to be distrusted was that invisible army which had paved the way for the invasion in the years before and which still remained an indispensable, perhaps the most indispensable, part of the whole army of occupation. The German officers themselves were subjected to constant espionage. Between courses of an officers' dinner at Lille, to which

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he had to be taken in order that his officer might be present, Leach went to the coat-room. There he found the only other civilian invited, a member of the German Secret Service, going through the pockets of the overcoats. With us, the man at the next table, apparently so much absorbed in the *Messenger de Bruxelles*, might be listening to every word of the talk with ears trained for the work by five years in a business-house in Sheffield. The demure little middle-aged woman over the way might have a number in the Wilhelmstrasse. Yet at times the need of a means of communication in the open was imperative. There existed happily a domain of language which was a trackless country, a No Man's Land, for any one not trained to its bye-paths, its pitfalls, its quagmires. English would not do. French would not do. There remained, for the

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baffling of inquisitive ears, the vast, rich range of American slang. On that ground we felt we were safe.

To illustrate. I had just heard that a German in the United States had made an attempt upon the life of the President. It was at a time when every event of the kind was making our participation in the war more certain. How the news leaked in I do not know. I shall never know. That was the peculiarity of news in Belgium. You heard the rumor but you could trace it to no apparent source. In the barber's shop were several German officers. Entered Sperry of California, who had just returned from a trip to the provinces, and would be likely to know nothing of the report. It would be better if he were informed before reporting at the Pass Zentrale. He took the next chair. The information was coded and the dialogue ran somewhat as follows:

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"Nix on any of these spangled Delicates-sens getting wise, but if there were any wully extrees in this burg, they'd be scare heading about a Heinie who has just tried to put over a Czolgos on the Main Squeeze."

A pause and then back from the lathered lips in the other chair:

"I getcha, Steve. What's the next call for dinner in the dining car?"

"You can search me. But I think it is all to the merry."

"Say, when will those guys stop trying to steal second with the bases full?"

"What do you expect from Bush League beans? The skids for them! But tell me. Am I taking too long a lead off first?"

"Ataboy! These gazabos will never tumble to the line in a thousand years."

Thus was the purity of the language preserved by the C. R. B.

PART III

GETTING OUT OF THE BOTTLE

I

A PARIS MEMORY

IT was a sunshiny afternoon ten or eleven days after the arrival in Paris. Percy of Mississippi and the writer, meeting by chance in front of the Madeleine, decided that a *porto blanc* would be neither unwise nor unpleasant, and found a table in front of the first café on the right side of the Rue Royale as you go down towards the Place de la Concorde. Incidentally, it is a café associated with a great scene in fiction. There, in Alphonse Daudet's "Sappho," Jean Gaussin fell in with Caoudal, the sculptor, and Dechelette, the engineer, and for the first time learned the story of Fanny Legrand's tempestuous past. References

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were made to the book and the scene, and then I pointed to the groups of Sengalese soldiers passing along the sidewalk, asked Percy if the sight of the glistening black faces did not make him homesick for Greenville, and assuming a Southern drawl, discoursed learnedly of certain dishes dear to the Southern palate. But my flippancy did not bring the expected response. About Percy's eyes there was still a trace of the odd, strained look. Ten days previously I had reached the conclusion that I was one sane man traveling with six unbalanced companions; that is until they informed me that they had seriously considered having the train stopped at Charenton and seeing that I was safely put away for a time in the *maison de santé* there. Now for a time, Percy maintained a persistent silence. Finally he spoke. "Tell me," he said, "was it all a dream?" I understood. I recalled

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the last weeks in Brussels, the turbulent days of doubts and expectations; I recalled our departure from the Gare du Nord, the weeping Belgians and the last call of the gathered men of the C. R. B. as the train was pulling out, "Good-by, boys! Good luck! If you get through all right let us know, for we will be soon following you"; I recalled the strange night ride to the frontier, the six-handed poker game under the dim light, the seventh man sitting with face against the window pane, whispering reassuringly, "It's all right, I recognize the down grade into Liège. We seem to be bound for Cologne as they promised us"; I recalled the hours in Cologne, and the trip up the left bank of the Rhine, and the glaring eyes of bitter dislike, and the changes at Mayence and Offenbergl, and the night spent in Zingen in the Black Forest, and the acid bath for which we were prepared but which we

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escaped, and the first welcoming voice that told us that we were on Swiss soil. It was the voice of the Swiss soldier to whom I handed my passport. "Goot ole Oonited States," he said with a grin as he examined the document. And it sounded like music. In looking back I knew what Percy had meant when he asked "Was it all a dream?"

II

LAST DAYS IN BRUSSELS—THE CHANGING CITY

“**O**UR business is to keep up the *ravitaillement* of these poor people as long as we can,” the Brussels Director, Warren Gregory of San Francisco, had said at the first general meeting of the delegates after the breaking of diplomatic relations in February. “That is our duty. But we have another duty. That is, if war between Germany and the United States becomes inevitable, to get out of Belgium as quickly as possible. To stay under such conditions would be to hamper seriously the Government at Washington. When it comes to that point we must go at once. That is,” he added significantly, “if they

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will let us." When, about the first of March, we heard of the Zimmerman note, there could no longer be any doubt. That bit of news differed from other news because there was no attempt on the part of the German papers that came into Belgium, or the German controlled Belgian press, to obscure or delay it. They were too eager to tell what they thought of the prying Yankee trick that had found the heart of the intrigue. "Base treachery against the Imperial Government on United States soil" is a literal translation. There was a certain humor in the situation. The fact that the plot had promised California to Japan, and Texas to Mexico, gave the opportunity for protest against the presence at the morning table of Leach and Kittridge of San Francisco, and Maverick of San Antonio. It was not pleasant to be sitting down to breakfast with two Japs and a Greaser. But they retorted

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that New Jersey—my native State—was to be a German province, and called me “Boche” or “Fritzie.”

The last weeks in Brussels were weeks of waiting, during which the dominant emotion was one of curiosity as to what was about to happen next. One evening in the hour between the return from the Dock Office and the sortie for dinner, there was a ring at the door bell, and Louis appeared, twirling his mustache, and proffering a note. It was from Sperry and read: “They will be coming to go through the house for brass and copper. For the Love of Mike make sure that every man’s room is safe. Destroy all French and English newspapers. Particularly see that those copies of *Punch* with the pictures of him (him of course meant the Kaiser) are all before the war numbers. Go through every man’s correspondence. It’s no time to be

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squeamish. I would do it myself only I am not coming to the house!"

In those weeks the aspect of the city seemed to change. It had been the coldest winter in the history of the land, and a winter practically without coal. In No. 126 Avenue Louise we had acquired the habit of shivering ourselves to sleep at a temperature of twelve to fourteen below zero, centigrade. A thieving Belgian urchin would steal from a cart a piece of charcoal half the size of a brick and make a scampering, triumphant escape. The school houses were closed. All shops were ordered to shut their doors at five o'clock in the afternoon. Now, however, came occasional bright days that brought the promise of spring. Military activity became more in evidence. In January I had estimated the number of German soldiers in Brussels at thirty thousand. In March it was probably more than a hundred

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thousand. The new arrivals congested the Grand Place, studying, guidebook in hand, the gilded façades of the Hotel de Ville and the Guildhalls, and streamed down the Rue de l'Etuve to snigger before the Manneken. Rumor had the Kaiser at Liége, the Crown Prince at Namur, Hindenberg at Verviers. Cavalrymen tried out horses in the Avenue Louise. There were more sentries in the forbidden Rue de la Loi, before the Palais de la Nation, which was the headquarters of the military staff, and where, as a precaution against raids of the French and British airmen, the Belgian political prisoners were incarcerated just under the roof. Van Hee of the Consulate at Ghent appeared every third day in the C. R. B. Representatives' Room, with his invariable story of the German plan for the immediate invasion of Holland. We can forgive that story, for Van Hee was one of the men in the service who

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upheld the American tradition. There were other so-called American Consuls of which the same could not be said. One in particular, so I was told, was in the habit of explaining the violation of Belgian neutrality by the excuse "Our soldiers simply had to go through." Now, for the first time appeared in the papers disquieting references to the impending German retreat. There is no doubt of the fact that we were impressed. In cold blood we did not in the least credit the inspired news of the Belgian press. But the constant hammering, the insistence, day after day, upon Central successes and Entente reverses had had its effect. What must have been the impression made on the Belgians, after two and a half years under the strain? Men in the cafés claimed to know of the existence of vast subterranean chambers, in the construction of which tens of thousands of men had been

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engaged for months. For long months they had prayed for this Allied advance. Now that it was coming they feared for it. If you pointed out that Haig and Nivelle were likely to be thoroughly informed, they shook their heads. "It is a great trap. And even if they should come to Brussels there would be no Brussels. Ours is an undermined city." They felt the same about the idea of the entrance of the United States into the war. It revived hope and yet brought apprehension. The Americans of the C. R. B. could no longer remain, and that would mean letting go of the hand that had so long linked them to the world beyond. I think the pressure of that reassuring hand meant almost as much to Belgium as the material sustenance. Once, in a moment of depression, I confided to Maverick my feelings of general inadequacy. "The Belgian secretary at the Dock Office

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seems to do about four-fifths the work.”
“That’s what he is there for,” replied Maverick cheerfully; “you’re here to sign the papers you don’t understand, and to give these guys the glad hand.”

By the end of the second week of March it was no longer a question of whether we were going, but whether the occupying military authorities would let us go. With a foresight based on experience the Director had held the North of France men from their posts since the first week in February. This time there could be no reasonable excuse for detention on the ground of recent observation of the movements of military bodies near the front. Nevertheless the first conditions called for a stay at Baden-Baden for a period of fifteen or thirty days. The German passports given us so read, and not till we had crossed the Swiss frontier at Schaffhausen were we quite sure that Baden

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was not our destination. It was arranged that the departure should be made in two groups. First seven men would go through, and then the rest would follow two or three days later. The men selected to leave first were the North of France men, Charles Leach, Alfred C. B. Fletcher, and Tracy Kittridge of California, Robert Maverick of Texas, and Philip K. Potter of New York; and also William A. Percy of Mississippi, who had been stationed at Antwerp, and myself. The second group was to consist of all the other members of the C. R. B. with the exception of three men left to wind up the affairs of the office, and to be accompanied by Mr. Brand Whitlock and the other members of the American Legation. Incidentally I had lunch at the Legation with Mr. and Mrs. Whitlock the Friday before we left and Mrs. Whitlock told me that she had been packed up for departure

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since the day after the sinking of the *Lusitania*.

The Minister and Mrs. Whitlock were then living in the American Legation at 74 Rue de Trèves, a gloomy building in a gloomy street. American housewives at home complain of the servant problem. But think of the complications of Mrs. Whitlock's position, of what she had to guard against. For the German secret service agent who could in the guise of a domestic, wriggle his or her way into the minister's household, there were in Berlin Iron Crosses and material reward. Two years ago I had heard a story about Mrs. Whitlock. It was to the effect that one evening in the early days of the occupation, Mr. and Mrs. Whitlock and the man who had told the tale were sitting in the Legation library. The servants had gone for the night. Suddenly Mrs. Whitlock looked up

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and asked her husband "Through it all I have been pretty good, have I not?" He assured her that she had been all that and more. "Then I want to ask something," she continued. "Certainly, what is it?" "When they go away again can I take just one shot at them?" I recalled that story. But in the laughter of the Minister and of Mrs. Whitlock there was neither affirmation nor denial.

That the Minister described the coming of the German armies to Brussels in the words, "As, chanting, the column climbed the slope of the Chaussée de Louvain it seemed to be swinging out of the Feudal Ages" has already been told. The soldiers were moving from east to west. The probable line of march would be past the Botanical Gardens, the Palace Hotel, and the Gare du Nord, and then across the Senne Canal, in the direction of the Channel Coast.

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Or, reaching the Boulevards, the column would turn to the left, along the Boulevard de Waterloo to the Porte Louise, down the Avenue Louise to the Bois de la Cambre, and onward, past the Battlefield of Waterloo, towards the French frontier. Seeing the head of the column approaching, the Minister lost no time in returning to the Legation, where, in addition to Mrs. Whitlock, were his own mother and Mrs. Whitlock's mother. They must make haste, he urged. The Germans were passing through, and would probably slip away unseen if there were any unnecessary delay. He laughed at the recollection. "It never dawned upon me what a modern army would be like. I was thinking in terms of militia parades of the Middle West. Gone! Why for three days and three nights the seemingly endless host roared and rumbled through."

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For ten days or two weeks we were almost hourly waiting the orders to go. Several of these days were spent in mumbling over and over such phrases as "*M. S. H. G. Armée Belge 52,*" "*Pas de vos nouvelles depuis six mois. Exil dur. Vacancés obligatoire. Pâques à Anvers. Adrien toujours parmi nous.*" A memory kept in constant training by conceit and an ambition to be able to recall at a moment's notice certain trivialities of life, was at last to serve a useful and honorable purpose. Thanks to it there were later written and mailed in Paris ten or eleven letters from Belgians to their friends and relatives safe behind the British and French lines.

III

DEPARTURE—THE RHINE—THE BLACK FOREST

THE day came, the 29th of March. At noon we were told that we were to leave that night from the Gare du Nord, 10:20 Belge, 11:20 Boche. We were to meet for the last Brussels dinner in the Palace Hotel. We recalled the Palace a few evenings before, when at the entrance of five or six of us, the Belgian orchestra took a long chance, and whispering "*ravitaillement*," played "The Stars and Stripes Forever" under the noses of two or three hundred German officers. The Germans suspected the tune, but they were not quite sure, so grinningly the orchestra struck it up

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again and again. On the way to the dinner, there were stops to be made, good-bys to be said, hands to be shaken, toasts to be drunk. Perhaps the memory of those last hours is not unnaturally somewhat hazy. I recall that when the word was passed that but eight minutes remained before the leaving hour, I had forgotten in which coat room I had left hat, ulster, and suit case,—they were found by Curtis of Boston (Thanks, Curtis! I did not have time to say it then, or to tell you how like you the kindly action was) and by him flung through the window of the moving train—I remember the walk, hatless and coatless, across the icy square, and the long platform lined by the C. R. B. and what seemed to be all weeping Belgium, and then the whistle, and the swinging hats, and the farewell cheer. “Good-by, boys! Good luck!”

There have been many games of poker

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played, but there has never been one just like the one played through that night, broken by the stop and frontier examination at Herbesthal. Calls were made in whispers. If you raised a mark it made no difference whether the stake tossed upon the suit case was a zinc Belgian twenty-five centime piece or a handful of paper. Everything went, cards or money, at the value it was called. From time to time curious, resentful German eyes peered in at us from the corridor windows. The mad Americans puzzled them. Kultur contemplated the barbarians. Then came the morning, and in the dawn the spires of Cologne Cathedral. We had taken with us our own provisions, loaves of bread and packages of military biscuit, hard-boiled eggs and chocolate. At Cologne we were to stay from six o'clock till half past nine, and, carrying our food packages, we made our way from the station

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to a near-by hotel, through streets that were surprisingly deserted. With us was our custodian Oberlieutenant L., who had thoughtfully sought the seclusion of another compartment during the journey of the previous night. Here I want to express appreciation of L.'s consideration throughout that trip. Our passports read for home, via Germany, Switzerland, France, and Spain. I think he suspected that we were really bound for Paris. But he said nothing. I don't think he blamed us. So here is good luck to you, Oberlieutenant, and bad luck to your regiment!

After breakfasting at the hotel from our own supplies, there was a brief visit to the almost empty Cathedral, a short walk through the near-by streets, and then we entered the train for Mayence. Soon we were winding along the Rhine. "So you saw the Seven Mountains, and Drachenfels, and the

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Castle of Rolandseck," said, soon after my arrival home, an enthusiastic Rhenish traveler of other years. "I did," I replied; "I am now standing on the right bank of the Rahway River. Eight weeks ago to-day I was on the left bank of the Rhine. Somehow the Rahway looks better to me than the Rhine did." Two days after the arrival in New York Percy of Mississippi, en route for his native Greenville, met me by appointment at the Princeton Club. There we chanced upon Dyer, who had lived in the same house with Percy in Brussels, and we crossed the square to take lunch at the Players Club. Picking up the bill of fare Percy began to laugh as he read out "Shad roe and bacon." "Don't you remember going up the Rhine your persistent attempts to tell of the first meal you were going to have at home? You always began with shad roe and bacon. We never let you get beyond

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that. But five minutes later you would start again with shad roe and bacon and have to be squelched again."

In times of peace the journey from Brussels to Paris was one of four and a half hours. Our roundabout way consumed six nights and five days. The only meal on the trip through Germany at which we drew upon the resources of the country was on the train from Cologne to Mayence. The meal—the train was one of the crack trains of Germany—consisted of a small coffee cup of pea soup, a fragment of stock fish, and two inches of perfectly dry omelette. We were guilty of an indiscretion. We produced a large loaf of bread. But it served as a diversion. The people in the dining car for the moment stopped glaring hatred at the "Amerikaners" to look with covetous eyes at their bread. By the time we had been shifted at Mayence for a way train to

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Offenberg, there to change again for Zingen, that state of irritation which had led to the suppression of my well meant efforts to provide entertainment by the construction of a United States menu, had become general. We were in the full swing of the Hymn of Hate. Everybody snarled at everybody else. Potter accused Leach of being a grouch, and told him what he thought of him. When, at midnight, we arrived at Zingen, I tried to swing a suit case through the window, I smashed Maverick's hat. When he protested I turned on him savagely and told him I would do it again if it so pleased me. When I apologized some time later he grinned. He had understood. But somehow I think the apology was unnecessary. The next morning I entered a barber shop, Maverick came in to make strange motions behind me and to exhort the barber in what sounded like execrable Ger-

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man. I think he was telling him that I was one of the hated "Amerikaners" and pointing out the barber's obvious duty as a patriotic German while he had me at his mercy in the chair. We slept some that night in Zingen, thanks to the midnight supper of our bread and eggs, washed down by glasses of the rather sour wine of the country. When I awoke and threw wide the shutters, it was to look out on gabled windows, slanting roofs, against a background of dark trees. In my teens I had gone down the Rhine, stopping at Mayence, Coblenz, and Cologne. Now I was in a corner of the world new to me. The Black Forest! From earliest years there had been magic and mystery in the name. But depression came with the sight of the sullen faces, the eyes either averted, or bright with frank dislike. Could this be the Black Forest of legend, of folklore; where eighteenth cen-

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ture innkeepers prepared descending beds for unwary travelers; the Black Forest of peasant weddings, and rustic dances, and chiming bells, and watchmen calling the night?

IV.

FRANCE—THE STARRY BANNER—YARNS OF PARIS

OH, the joy of coming out of a land of bitterness and poison, where officers in train corridors drew away from physical contact with the spitting sneer "Amerikaner," to find oneself in a country where every face was smiling welcome! We were journeying northward again in the train from Bellegarde to Paris. From Zingen we had made our way to the Swiss-German frontier at Schaffhausen; thence to Zurich, and on to Berne, where a two days' stay was necessary in order to obtain the required visé of the American Legation and the credential letter from the French Embassy. The latter read, translated, "The Ambas-

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sador of the French Republic in Switzerland has the honor to recommend to the good offices of the French civil and military authorities M. — — —, member of the American Commission for Relief in Belgium and the North of France, returning to the United States by France and Spain (via Paris)."

In Brussels I was in the habit of saying to the other men in the house that they were welcome to help themselves to anything of mine, except my toothbrush and my American passport. On French soil, with the Ambassador's introduction in my pocket, all other documents were tossed to the bottom of the trunk. Not that it opened all gates. But it made obtaining the countless "*Sauf conduits*" and "*Permis de sejour*" necessary a mere matter of form. Incidentally the only trouble I experienced in traveling in France had to do with my birthplace. In

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response to the question, "*Ou etes vous née?*" I would reply glibly and without any attempt at Gallicising, "Rahway, New Jersey." Incomprehensible as it appears, the officials seemed never to have heard of Rahway, New Jersey, and, after puzzled stares, would write down "Rio Janeiro."

From Berne we traveled to Lausanne, and along Lake Lemman to Geneva, where there was a wait of two hours, after which we took the train for Paris. In Brussels the task of days talking nothing but ungrammatical French became often irksome, and the luncheon hour at the office and the evenings at 126 Avenue Louise where conversation without mental seeking for the right word was possible came as a positive relief. But after the days in Germany and German Switzerland the sound of French-speaking voices was like papers from the old home town.

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It was five o'clock in the morning of Wednesday, April 4th, that the delayed train stopped at the little station of Laroche, about half way between Dijon and Paris. On the platform were rolls and chocolate, and smiling French officers, clad in light blue or khaki, and wearing the *calotte*, the boat-shaped fatigue cap, were pacing to and fro. "*C'est la guerre*," I heard one of them say, and in the newspaper in his hands I saw the black headlines announcing the entrance of the United States into the world war. "Don't tell me I'm a belligerent," grumbled Fletcher as I went back to spread the news, "I already know it." If we had doubted it then, the aspect of Paris would have told the story. Everywhere the Stars and Stripes were flying. The city had been ransacked for the flag, and from the Government orders went out that it should fly over every school house and public building

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in France. Yet in one way France was a disappointment. I had been so long bottled up, so long suppressed, that I wanted to hear noise, and to help make it. At least I expected to hear an occasional "*Vive la France!*" I never did. I saw the sentiment shining in the eyes of children. But it was a changed France that I found; a strangely quiet France; a nation smiling, but still wracked by anguish.

At three o'clock that afternoon I went to sleep. I was unjustly awakened at eleven o'clock the next morning by the ringing of the telephone bell. "This is Phil Potter speaking," the voice said. "Be at the Hotel France et Choiseul before two. We are invited to the French Senate to hear Prime Minister Ribot formally announce the entrance of the United States into the war." It will be many years before any of us ever forget that scene, or the simple, impressive

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words of the aged Premier. "We all feel that something far surpassing a political event has just taken place. The most pacific democracy on earth has announced that she can no longer remain neutral when the issue is so clearly one between civilization and barbarism, liberty and despotism. The great American republic, in entering the war on our side and the side of our Allies, asks neither conquest nor compensation. Simply she must take up the gage of battle so ruthlessly thrown down." Then the standing Senate turning to the box of the American Ambassador, the long handclapping, the "*Vive les États Unis!*" and the unfurling of our flag.

Succeeding days brought similar invitations and ceremonies. There was the *Prise d'Armes* at the Invalides, the decoration with the *Croix de Guerre* or the *Medaille Militaire* at the Grand Palais of the terribly

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wounded and the widows and orphans of those who had given their lives for the awarded honors, the Congress of the Representatives of the Allied Nations at 136 Avenue des Champs Élysées, and one scene, at an exhibition of cinema war pictures made for the French government, that illustrated the sentiment of the C. R. B. The later departures from Belgium had just reached Paris, and in the darkness I could recognize faces I had not seen since the last night in Brussels. At a point in one of the scenes shown, from the facing trenches sprang up hundreds of green-gray clad men. Their arms had been thrown away. With hands high above their heads, some of them waving pictures of *frau* and *kinder*, they rushed towards the French guns. You could almost hear the "*Kameraden! Kameraden!*" of surrender. A cackle, rising into a yell, went up from the throats of the C. R. B. men.

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"It's the real thing. I guess we know those uniforms. We've seen enough of them."

"Why ask me?" I have retorted to persons at home who have demanded information about the war. "You have been far enough away to have reasonably authentic news. Closer to the fighting we had little but rumor." In Brussels we could hear that Lille had been razed to the ground and that St. Quentin was in flames. Of extraordinary variety were the yarns of Paris. I don't know how many of them have crossed the Atlantic. I tell them as I heard them, asking pardon if the tale be old.

First there was the story of the Kaiser's Paris dinner. It was the day before the tide turned in the Battle of the Marne, when the armies of Von Kluck were fifteen miles from Paris, that agents of the French secret service paid an unexpected visit to the Hotel Astoria in the Champs Élysées. Under the

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roof they found a wireless that was being operated by the German maître d'hôtel. They also found full plans for the dinner that had been ordered for the Emperor William for the following night. Arrangements had been made with characteristic Teutonic regard for detail. His Majesty was to sit at a table in a corner of the dining room overlooking the Arch of Triumph. The menu, of which I was shown an alleged copy, is too long to give here. It is enough to tell that it began with caviar, then oysters of Ostend, then a thick soup, and then a *filet of sole*. The wines were of choice vintages from the Astoria's cellars. Just what foundation there was for the story it is hard to say. But it is known the bodies of some of the Prussian Guard found on the field after the retreat were in the white uniforms to be worn for the Kaiser's entry into the city.

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There was the "inside" story of the Battle of the Marne, which, but for the treachery of five French generals, two of whom were shot, and the three others condemned to life imprisonment, was to have ended in the utter annihilation of the invading hosts. For years the French General Staff had had the battleground in mind, for years French officers had been sent out to study every pool, tree, and rock of the vast terrain. Never once through the long retreat was the line for the stand forgotten. It was to be the grave of Prussian military ambition. But the five Grouchys who were to have brought up the reserves held to deliver the *coup de grâce* failed and the shattered armies of Von Kluck escaped to dig themselves in along the Aisne.

Even more extraordinary was the tale of General Gallieni's end. "You think it was peritonitis that killed him. That was what

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the papers were told to print. *Mon ami*, he was shot at midnight while presiding at the council table in the fortress of Verdun by a General in the German pay. In a battle-scarred field just outside the city is a grave on which are carved the words, 'Herr, Traitor to France.'” Then the strange yarn was told, with many assurances of its absolute truth. The General, an Alsatian with a German wife, had been in high command when the Crown Prince launched the terrific drive against Verdun. Deaf to the appeals of his officers, he ordered the evacuation of the forts of Vaux and Douaumont. Secret investigation discovered overwhelming proof of his intrigues with the enemy. He was summoned to the council room in the citadel. At the head of the table were seated Gallieni, Nivelle, and Petain. His opinion as to the course to be followed asked, the doomed General advised retreat

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along the whole line. Then Gallieni stood up to read the indictment and to throw upon the table the damning evidence. In conclusion he drew his revolver from his belt and handed it to the guilty officer, telling him to go into the next room and blow out his brains. Instead the convicted man seized his own pistol and shot Gallieni through the stomach. The traitor was shot at dawn.

V

HOMeward BOUND

AN old friend—O. J.—, to whom I had said good-by last in July, 1916, on the French Line pier in New York was finishing his novel in Cannes, and thither I made my way to find repose and Mediterranean sunshine, and the environment of such a peace that I had forgotten existed in the world. Vividly I recall the waking of the first morning. The sun was shining. The voices of playing children came up from the garden below. The force of the Mistral that had been blowing for days had died down, though it still swayed the branches of the palms and olives, and lashed the Mediterranean into foam. The windows framed

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the panorama that sweeps from the Iles des Lérins to the Esterel. From the near-by room came the sound of a Victrola. It was the first heard in four months. It had been playing Harry Lauder's "The British Bulldog's Watching at the Door." But Oh! I wanted to hear "Dixie" and "Marching Through Georgia" and "My Old Kentucky Home" and for sheer swing, "There'll be a Hot Time in the Old Town To-night."

Yet strangely, in the midst of that soothing tranquillity, hundreds of miles away from the nearest battle front, I saw the great struggle with a surer vision and a broader comprehension than ever before or since. The French advance of April 17 was at first heralded as a great success. American cablegrams to the French papers pictured the enthusiasm with which the news had been received by the audience in the Metropolitan Opera House in New York—the smiling di-

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rector appearing before the rung down curtain, and with uplifted hand saying: "*Notre splendide allié, notre chère sœur la France, vient de remporter une grande victoire. Dix mille prisonniers. C'est le commencement de la fin!*" But in Cannes we knew better. Invalided officers of high rank, who knew every hectare of the bloody ground, shook their heads. Progress and prisoners, yes; but you will learn that the price paid was a terrible one. Be it understood that it was not as a casual visitor, even as a citizen of the great and powerful nation that had just become France's ally, that I was entrusted with such confidences; but as a member of the Do-As-You-Please Club which dined around an American flag flying from the neck of an empty wine bottle on a table in the Hotel Suisse. It was my company that guaranteed me. It is to Cannes, its smiling face and its plenty that my

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thoughts turn back when I hear, as we all hear from time to time of the terrible plight of France, bled white, and menaced by starvation. I recall a Sunday drive back in the mountains to Auribeau, an old, old town of winding streets climbing to the ancient church that crowns the hilltop. Close by the church is the school house with its garden. "Do you see that?" said O. J., pointing to the garden. "That is the answer. That is why they are licking the Germans."

Two weeks later, homeward bound, we were making our way across Southern France. From the windows of the train, which took eight hours for the journey from Cannes to Marseilles, we saw the vast camps, exact reproductions of fighting fields of the North, where French officers were training the Sengalese in the grim business of war; and, from time to time, the air black with

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the maneuvering bird-men. Then Tarascon, land of Tartarin and the *galejade*, Cette, Carcassonne,—“He never gazed on Carcassonne: each mortal has his Carcassonne,”—Toulouse, and Bordeaux, with its Barbary Coast, and its strange driftage of the Seven Seas. There I was to hear the latest news of the C. R. B. men and to read Percy’s Greenville cablegram of congratulation, rich with the flowery eloquence of the old South.

Recalling the length of that cablegram I feel sure that Greenville must have assumed an issue of long term bonds to pay for its transmission. With wicked envy I taunted Percy with its superlatives. With true politeness of the heart he attempted to soothe me with the suggestion that a similar one for me was probably somewhere on the way. But I knew better. My native town had already done its bit for me. “It was

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the night before I sailed," I explained moodily. "They arrested me and they took me to the jail. Oh, yes. It *was* the 5th of January, and I *was* running the car on the old 1916 license plates."

There was to Bordeaux an American flavor that it had never known in the years before. American cattlemen lurched about the streets. As you were walking along the water front accents at once nasal and fuddled stumbled through a hard luck story and sought to wheedle a loan. A small group of gunners that had come over on United States ships rioted in an affluence that was amazing but short lived. The men were in possession of an apparently inexhaustible supply of highly colored certificates designed to advertise a new brand of chewing tobacco. These they proceeded to spend royally. "This," one of them would

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say, peeling off a certificate, "is good for two thousand crowbars. Keep the change." The situation did not seem so comical when they surveyed it from behind the bars of French cells. Their nationality saved them serious trouble. After being held a few hours to think matters over, they were released with the warning to behave themselves in future. Two or three days before the *Chicago* sailed, the morning train from Paris brought eight or ten American ambulance drivers homeward bound. They soon exhausted the diversions that the city afforded. Then they learned that there were many thousand German prisoners of war in the neighborhood of Bordeaux. "Let us go call on the Boches," some one suggested. So they went, and derived huge satisfaction from gazing, and thrusting out their tongues, and dangling fake sausages attached to

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sticks. It was the only case of ill-treatment of German prisoners in France of which I heard.

In a previous chapter reference has been made to our use of American slang in Brussels as a medium by which we could frustrate German listeners. That sanctuary of language, into which so few foreigners are ever able to penetrate, belongs to every nation. John Poe, who died greatly in Flanders with the Black Watch, and who, I am sure, met death with the same kind smile on his face that he wore the first day I met him, a quarter of a century ago, in the old Osborn Club house at Princeton, when I was a freshman trying for the class team, often wrote to his brothers telling of sitting among his fellows of the regiment, linguistically almost a stranger. In France the *argot* of before the war was baffling enough. There has sprung up a new *argot*, born of the great

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conflict, the *argot* of the *poilus*. Read, or try to read René Benjamin's much discussed "Gaspard," or "Le Feu" by Henri Barbusse, which received the *Prix Goncourt*. A French officer who crossed on the *Chicago* laughingly acknowledged that there were times when he was hard put to it to comprehend. It was not *argot* that was used as a cypher in one instance, according to the tale of the genial LeDantec, prince of transatlantic commissaires and good fellows. Nearing the danger zone, one of the French liners was hailed by a vessel claiming to belong to the same line. "We want to know your exact whereabouts," was the sense of the message. But these are days when ships are suspicious of cajoling words plucked out of the air, and steam away under full power from S. O. S. calls. Finally the reply with the desired information was sent. But as a precaution it was worded in Breton. Now ten

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thousand Germans understand French to one who has the slightest knowledge of Breton, but there is not a real French ship on the sea without some one on board who calls the ancient language his own.

There was no spy mania on board the *Chicago*. The French officials at Bordeaux were taking no chances. Their work had been thoroughly done. But from the point of view of people who think of transatlantic travel as it was before August, 1914, we were a strange ship's company, far stranger than the one on the *Nieuw Amsterdam*. First there were the returning American Ambulance drivers, a service that had apparently been recruited from all classes and conditions. Two of them enlivened the first evening by a sanguinary mix up all over the smoking room. The row had been coming for some time, the other *ambulanciers* explained. There had been bad blood be-

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tween the two back in Paris. Stretching his uniform at all points almost to bursting was Nicolini—that is not his name—with his great laugh and his dreadful grammar. “Read ’em and weep, boys,” was his invariable admonition as he dealt the cards in the poker game. Then his deep voice raised in unmelodious song, shook the ceiling of the smoking room. “Oh, some girls will and some girls won’t: some girls do and some girls don’t.” It ended there. That was as much as he knew. But the constant repetition became the ship’s tragedy. From the poker game player after player drifted away. Finally even “Nic” joined the deserters. “What do you think?” he confided in a hoarse whisper. “There’s a man cheating in that game. *Cheating in a franc limit.*” Over and over he kept emphasizing that phase of the crime. “A franc limit! Did you ever hear the like?” “Some night,” said

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O. J. to me, "you will be coming out of the Hotel Knickerbocker, and a familiar voice will greet you with 'Taxi? Taxi?' and you will look up and see Nic." The remark was in no spirit of detraction. It simply meant that it would not be surprising to find the genial soldier of fortune in any avocation or orbit.

The ambulance driver with the Buffalo address had announced himself before we sailed. Perhaps with the idea of comforting the few women passengers he had loudly proclaimed that the U boats were after the *Chicago* this trip and were going to get her, sure. He knew, because he had inside information. "We military men have our responsibilities," he told Percy reassuringly. "If anything happens I will keep an eye on you." This to Percy, who was sheer grit, who once went, single handed, into a mob of lynchers, and took out his man. (Percy

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does not know that I know that, and, I fear, will not like my telling it.) We could not place the man until we realized that he was in a state bordering almost on panic. Occasionally, in the day time, he slept. But between the mouth of the Gironde and the Narrows he never took off more than his leather puttees. Night after night he paced the wind swept, spray wet deck. In his talk he was neither tactful nor modest. Consequently advantage was taken of his apprehensions and credulity. The list of the ship and what it might portend were gravely discussed in his presence. Silence was demanded in order that the working pumps below might be more distinctly heard. Certain riotous spirits of the smoking room donned the life belts and insisted on patrolling the deck in his company.

The *Chicago* was bringing back to the United States the officers and crews of three

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American merchantmen that had been torpedoed, two in the Mediterranean, and one in the Bay of Biscay. It was the same story that all the survivors told; the pitiless firing on the crews after they had taken to the boats. The skipper of one of the destroyed vessels was a Swede. But his wife was as Irish as the lovely River Shannon. Her narrative was rich with descriptive quality and invective. "The divvils! Niver will I touch hands again with one of them as long as I live. My husband sez to me, 'Aggie, stand up! Maybe when they see ye they'll stop firing!' Stop firing, is it? The next shot shook all the hairpins out of me head!"

The trivial tale draws to a close. The ropes were cast off, and the *Chicago* steamed down the widening river on its way to the Bay of Biscay. A few hours before our departure the *Rochambeau* had arrived from New York. The incoming passengers told

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of the submarine that had been encountered forty miles from the mouth of the Gironde, of the quick turn of the steamship's wheel, of the torpedo that had missed by twenty yards, and the stern chase almost to the French coast. But there was fight, there was the menace of swift destruction, in the gleam of the long "Seventy-five" at the stern, the short "Seventy-five" at the bow. Clustered about each were blue jacketed gunners from the French Navy. The cylindrical shells were being passed up to the gun decks. Somehow the sight of the swinging barrels, and the lithe figures of the men, brought a sense of reassurance.

There came to mind the story of the man, who, on the eve of a duel, was informed that his opponent of the dawn was a famous marksman, who could shatter a wine glass at thirty paces. "But," he said, "the wine glass does not hold a pistol." The broad-

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side of the *Lusitania*, steaming unsuspectingly into the Irish Sea, had been the wine glass unarmed. There was nothing to hurry the cruel aim, to jump the nerves that had governed the guiding eyes and hands. The *Chicago* was the wine glass with finger on the trigger. Nor were the guarding guns all. There was no chance of the nameless terror. Come what might we were to be given a chance. The life boats were swung far out, ready to be dropped to the water. Every one knew his boat and his place in it, and the nature of the signal that was to govern his actions. The first two nights on deck, near your boat, fully dressed, and with life belt at hand, were the instructions as the vessel neared the danger zone. The third day a man in naval uniform, with black circles about his eyes, appeared in the dining saloon. It was the Commandant, for the first time leaving the bridge. The

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U-boat infested waters were behind us. We were in the open sea. Across it we came back to an America that I had never seen before, and, once this grim job is done and thoroughly done, may I never see again.

THE END

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